

HISTORY
OF THE
GREAT FRENCH REVOLUTION



ANNIE BESANT IN 1885

HISTORY
OF THE
GREAT FRENCH REVOLUTION

(FROM THE STANDPOINT OF THE PEOPLE)

**FOURTEEN LECTURES DELIVERED BETWEEN
THE YEARS 1875 AND 1884**

BY
ANNIE BESANT

WITH A FOREWORD BY
C. JINARĀJADĀSA

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FOREWORD

DR. ANNIE BESANT is not strong enough at the moment to write a Foreword to this book, and so I write it, recording a few things concerning it which she has mentioned to me.

Once, when she was the young vicar's wife, her brother-in-law, the novelist Walter Besant, warned her against her "fatal facility of speech," as he termed it. Years afterwards, when she had joined the Secularist ranks, she remembered the phrase, and so she purposely put her mind to kinds of work which required accuracy and precision. Her colleague, Charles Bradlaugh, had a fine library, one especially remarkable for the large number of works on the French Revolution. Among these were many compilations which recorded what the newspapers of Paris had said day by day during the Revolution itself. Here was a plethora of material, and Annie Besant read and digested it all, and began a series of lectures on the subject. One part of the Free-thought propaganda at the time consisted in organising for the working classes lecture courses in science, economics, history, etc.; it was natural

therefore that Annie Besant should lecture first, and then revise the lectures for printing.¹

Dr. Besant has repeatedly mentioned to me that her history of the French Revolution was written by her *from the standpoint of the People*. She said that the works written on the Revolution were many, but that they were all of them unfair to the starving masses, whose only hope of something better lay in what actually did happen, that is, a Revolution. The historians denounced the blood-thirstiness of the Terror, but did not recognise that all its brutalities were merely the rebound of the brutalities of the nobility and gentry of France towards the dumb and suffering masses. Here, in India, many a time Dr. Besant has said in the course of her political addresses, that what she dreaded most in India was a "revolution of hunger". In reprinting her book, I have, at her request, placed on the title-page the explanatory words: "From the Standpoint of the People."

Dr. Besant's history stops at the death of Robespierre. As all who read the book to the end will see, for her his death does not mean merely, as it does to most, the ending of the Terror, but the opening of the era which brings Napoleon and his Empire. With Robespierre's death, the Republic is dead. Her estimate of Robespierre is not the usual

¹ Lectures I—VI were delivered at South Place, Finsbury, London, in 1875; Lectures VII—X in the Hall of Science Club and Institute, London, in 1883; Lectures XI—XIV in 1884 at the same place.

one; he is usually visualized as the bloodthirsty spirit and guiding genius of the Terror. She holds a different view. He is an idealist, wonderfully noble in his idealism, but hesitating at a crisis when swift action is needed to save the day. Therefore she says of him: "a man of quick resolve would now dare all, and naming his foes would give confidence to all save these; but quick resolve is not possible to Robespierre; he hesitates; Barère seizes the opportunity let slip, and on his urgency the Convention repeals the vote; Robespierre is lost."

Dr. Besant once said to me that Robespierre is one of the great pathetic figures in history, for he saw an ideal to accomplish but had not the strength to do it. Instead of the Terror being of his making, to her the Terror grew to be what it became because his guiding hand was withdrawn. Certainly the last pages of this history, describing the end of Robespierre, leave a profound impression on the reader's mind.

The reprinting of this work by the Theosophical Publishing House is due to my suggestion. Some twelve years ago, when in Sydney in Australia, I happened to be examining a barrow outside a second-hand book shop, and there my eye caught the title of a book by Annie Besant, "History of the Great French Revolution". I was unaware she had written such a book. It was placed in the barrow evidently as a book of little value, for it

was marked "six-pence". I bought the book, and read it through, almost at one sitting. For I felt, "This is the book I have long wanted to give me a *general idea* of the French Revolution." I had first known of the French Revolution from Dickens's *Tale of Two Cities*; ever since I heard it read aloud to me and to my fellow-pupil by our tutor after school-hours (no better way than that of remembering a book), I had wanted to know the *why* of the Revolution. Certainly Dickens had described the hunger of the people and the callousness of the nobles; but one could not grasp why like an avalanche event swept upon event to usher in the Terror. In college days I dipped into Carlyle, and quickly turned away. His book did not seem to me to be history at all (this was before I had "discovered" Carlyle). I tried one or two other works, but with similar results. It was only when I read Annie Besant's book that I really seemed to visualize the French Revolution as one whole.

Since then, I have read Louis Madelin's *French Revolution* with intelligent appreciation. I have gone so far as to search in France for, find and purchase, the eleven volumes of Michelet's *Histoire de la Révolution Française*. I feel that I can now "tackle" the French Revolution. This I owe to the book I purchased in Sydney for six-pence. It is because of the effect which the book had on me that I have obtained Dr. Besant's consent to its reprinting, knowing how it will fascinate those fond

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of history, and being sure that the French Revolution has many a lesson to teach us here in India—particularly to those who mean to be leaders of the People.

C. JINARĀJADĀSA

November, 1931.

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LECTURE I

HOW THE REVOLUTION BECAME AT ONCE POSSIBLE AND INEVITABLE

A TIME arrives in the history of every people at which a change becomes necessary,} and the only question which remains to be answered is: "How shall the change be brought about?" In the stage of barbarism a tyranny is inevitable; the king is then, as the very name signifies, the *König*, the *Can-ner*, the man who *can*, and the sore need of peoples pushes to the front the one among them who is ablest and strongest, and the man who can direct and guard the tribe becomes by right divine, i.e., by natural, by in-born, right, the man who shall rule. [A Monarchy is the acknowledgment of the weakness of the governed.] They kiss the hand of a king because that hand alone is strong enough to strangle the foe, whose grip is on the throat of the nation. Just as the infant clings to the mother's breast, just as the child shelters its own weakness under the protecting arm of the father who can

defend, so does a people, in its infancy, in its powerlessness, cling to the side of the Monarch who can save, cower beneath the strength of the man who can shield. [But the growing nation gradually begins to resent as a despotism the tyranny which it once crouched under] as its safety; [and, as it becomes conscious of its own strength, it chafes under the mastery] in which it erewhile found its protection. The Government which suited the childhood of the nation is felt to be an insult to its manhood, and the right divine of the Monarchy becomes confronted with the higher and more sacred rights of Man. Then the question is first asked: "Why does a king reign? Does the nation exist for the sake of Royalty, or is it not rather Royalty which exists for the sake of the nation?" When once that crucial question rises to the lips of the people, the *change* is inevitable, although the method of the change may for a while remain in doubt.

How the change comes, whether in peace or in war, whether in reform or in revolt, depends upon the wisdom of the Monarchy and the misery of the people. A Republic carefully prepared for, into which the nation had been gradually educated, and which should be finally proclaimed by the voice of the people in Parliament, might come in peace and without bloodshed, if the Monarchy were wise enough not to draw the sword in self-defence. [The noblest revolutions arise from a stern determination

not to submit to injustice} the most terrible revolutions spring from the hunger of the mass of the populace. In the great English Revolution, spite of the Star Chamber atrocities, spite of the shameful cruelty to Leighton and to Prynne, the real root of the revolutionary feeling was in the heart of such men as Hampden and as Elliot—men who could not brook oppression, because their knees were too stiff to bend at the word of an archbishop or of a king. {In the great French Revolution, besides the passion for Liberty as Liberty, sown and nurtured by the philosophers,} there was also the fierce rebound of a people whom suffering had driven into madness, the wild shriek of a starving nation, of a crowd who were crying for bread. "The people," said Sully, "never rebel from fickleness, from a sheer liking for change; only the impatience of suffering causes revolt."

In this introductory lecture I propose to deal first, with the causes which made the Revolution possible, and, secondly, with the state of things which made it inevitable; with the thought that gave birth to liberty; with the conflicts that, by weakening her foes, made liberty attainable; with the agony that made any change a change for the better; with the terrible suffering of the people which made it necessary and just that the birth of a nation should be simultaneous with the death of an aristocracy. We must turn first to the era before Louis XVI, if we would learn how the Revolution

became possible, for popular suffering, however widespread, and however acute, could not alone, could not, without the unconscious aid of the tyrants, have wrought out the Revolution in France. The people were too weak to do more than to revolt and to be slaughtered, had not the powers who ruled them dug each other's graves. Thus in all ages do despots quarrel, and enable peoples to gain their own; and while Whigs and Tories battle for the mastery, the power slips from the aristocracy into the hands of the nation. To trace the Revolution fairly to that which made it possible, we should have to journey backwards as far as the Reformation, the time when men were first bidden to use their own brains instead of the brains of their ancestors, and to trust to their own judgment rather than to the word of the priest. Luther rang the first stroke of the bell which tolled in France for the execution of Europe's oldest Monarchy. But, for France herself, we will take Louis XIV as the most prominent founder of the French Revolution, the builder who laid the corner-stone of a temple to Freedom, while he dreamed he was architect of a Bastille, [the monarch who undermined the throne, the despot who paved the way for the feet of Liberty.]

The long minority of Louis aided the success of that iron tyranny which was the foster-mother of the Republic. Richelieu—mightiest minister that ever served a king—bent all his efforts in one

direction, to make the Monarchy of France the sole power in the State; the Church alone he strengthened outside the Monarchy, because in crushing heresy he crushed out independence, and a Church which was powerful by the support of the King was at once the buttress and the weapon of the Throne, strengthening the tyranny which nourished it, and aiding the Crown to oppress the people, since both alike throve on the misery of the nation. With this one exception, the policy of Richelieu was unvarying: to weaken the nobility, to weaken the Parliaments, to concentrate all power, all splendour, in the court of the King. The great nobles of France were mighty—Richelieu abased them; they ruled as feudal sovereigns in their rural castles—Richelieu drew them to Paris, by making the road to all distinction lie through the ante-chambers of Versailles. "In a few years the provincial châteaux were deserted, the rural interests forgotten; France was centred in Paris—Paris in Versailles."¹ The measures intended to strengthen the Monarchy were really allies in its overthrow, for hence it came to pass that the Throne became the sole tyranny, and when the Throne fell all tyranny fell with it. This fatal weakness is, fortunately, to be found in every despotism; it is held up by a single cord, and that cord cut, it falls and shivers into pieces. When the French Throne was attacked, there were no mighty feudatories to rally round it and to protect it; there

¹ *History of Europe*, Alison. Vol. i, p. 52. Ed. 1853.

were only silken courtiers, profligate triflers ; idlers in plenty who could bow gracefully in a King's saloons, but no *men* who could strike one blow for his Crown. They fled helplessly, like the cravens that they were, these debauched and degenerate sons of the once gallant nobles of France. The first grand step which made the Revolution possible was taken, when the aristocracy of France changed their character, and from being feudal lords, the centres of authority throughout the country, links in an iron chain which bound in subjection each several limb of the nation, they were transformed into the painted butterflies which flutter round a Throne, changing the iron helm for the plumed hat of the courtier, the sword for the dainty rapier. The feudal system lost all its power while retaining all its abuses, and the terrible nobles who had been the objects of a hatred curbed by fear, now became the objects of a hatred which was barbed and empoisoned by contempt.

In the early days of Louis literature was mighty. Corneille, Racine, Molière, made the French stage a power. Bossuet, Fénelon, Bourdaloue, reflected upon the Church the glory of their eloquence. Pecquet and Riolan led the way in medical discovery. Pascal, Descartes, and Gassendi made the eyes of all thinkers turn to France for light. Perhaps no such galaxy of literary stars can be discovered elsewhere as that which shone upon France during the minority of Louis XIV. Before Louis

died he had stifled French thought. And how? By "patronising" literature. It is one of the most indubitable facts in history that court patronage rings the knell of literary power. When authors are subsidised their independence is gone; genius cannot work in fetters, nor thought be turned into channels dug for it by the hands of a King. When the writer begins to think of what will best please his Royal patron, he has prostituted his intellect; he no longer writes the truth he sees, but he endeavours to see only the half truth, or the falsehood, which will be acceptable at court. Louis purchased French thought; he bound her to the steps of his Throne; he drugged her from the Circean cup of court favour. For a while she lay silent and apparently dead; but in the succeeding reign she awoke from her lethargy, and in the bound she made towards Freedom she dragged down the Throne. Louis died, and the nightmare of his tyranny rose from off the breast of France. On the day of his funeral the people were "intoxicated with wine and with joy at his death".¹ [The latter part of the reign of Louis saw the birth of the avengers of tyranny, of the men who were to destroy the Throne. Montesquieu, Voltaire, Diderot, Rousseau, d'Holbach, opened their eyes in a land where despotism was triumphant, where free expression of thought was impossible, where the only road to power was the favour of the King.] Galled

¹ *Vie de Voltaire*, Duvernet, p. 29.

by the iron hand which held them down, panting for liberty, they looked around at other nations, and found a land which had struck a blow for Freedom. Writhing themselves under the yoke of a King, they remembered that at their very doors there was a country which had claimed justice as against its Sovereign, which had brought a King to the block, impeached for high treason to the nation. With one impulse, as it were, they sprang to England, to Cromwell's England, to the England of Milton and of Elliot, of Hampden and of Vane; from the breast of England they sucked the milk of freedom, the England which later was, alas! to strangle the child Liberty whom she had nursed upon her knees. Buckle tells us that "during the two generations which elapsed between the death of Louis XIV and the outbreak of the Revolution, there was hardly a Frenchman of eminence who did not either visit England or learn English".¹ English thought was literally transplanted into France, and filtrated through every section of society. The travellers returned to France with the inspiration of freedom in their bosoms, and the crash was not long in coming. The tyranny in France was double-headed, the Church and the Monarchy were knit together, enemies and tyrants of the people. At the Church the first blows were struck, and the first trumpet note of defiance rang from the lips of the

¹ *History of Civilisation in England*, Buckle, vol. ii, p. 216. Ed. 1869. Buckle treats exhaustively this interesting point.

new-born Freethought. The revolt was the revolt of reason against authority, and the Church was the first object of attack, as a palpable persecutor of all thought save her own, and as being more easily assailable than the ancient and deeply-rooted national Monarchy of France. Here again the fatal hand of Louis XIV sowed the seeds of revolt. He had used the Church to control the people, and had increased its power that it might serve him the better. He had revoked the Edict of Nantes, and had dragooned the people into Catholicism. The terrible cruelties which preceded and accompanied that Revocation left behind them an undying hatred to the Church in whose interests they were perpetrated. Men speak of a few priests suffering during the Revolution! what had they done to hundreds of Huguenots? "Some they stripped naked, and after they had offered them a thousand indignities, they stuck them with pins from head to foot; they cut them with penknives, tore them by the noses with red-hot pincers, and dragged them about the rooms . . . they tied fathers and husbands to the bed-posts, and ravished their wives and daughters before their eyes."¹ "Some had boiling water poured into their mouths . . . some had lighted coals put into their hands, and were compelled to keep them closed until the coals went out." One man, named Ryan, was seized and tightly

¹ Quiek's *Synodicon*, vol. i, pp. 180, 181, as quoted by Buckle.

bound; "They ran pins under his nails, they burned gunpowder in his ears, they pierced his thighs in several places, and poured vinegar and salt into the wounds. By these torments they wore out his patience in two days, and obliged him to change his creed."¹ Put the few victims of the Revolution against these crowds of tortured human beings; put the so-called desecrated Churches against these desolated homes, and then judge between the men who tormented and the men who avenged! If the Church suffered during the Revolution, remember how she had inflicted suffering; remember that the men who struck at her were the men whose mothers had been outraged by her, the sons of those who had seen their wives dishonoured by a brutal soldiery, and to them revenge must have seemed a sacred duty rather than a crime. To those who know French history it is the moderation of the people which is marvellous, and not the bloodshed of which so much has been made. Against this Church the intellect of France arose; the leaders, the bishops, and other dignitaries, were not even respectable for their morals. The vilest of a vile court went to their debaucheries in the cassock of the priest. Dubois, the most publicly infamous of all, was made an Archbishop and a Cardinal, Massillon himself bearing witness to his purity of life, and was also unanimously chosen

¹ *Histoire de l'Edit de Nantes*, Benoist, vol. iii, pp. 887-890. Ed. 1695.

president of a general assembly of the French clergy, thus implicating the whole Church in his own shame.¹ Argument, satire, invective, ridicule, were launched against the Church and her Ministers. The Government took up the cause of the Church, and answered satire with *lettres de cachet*, argument with the Bastille. There was no great writer who escaped punishment; every man of note became a mark for persecution. With suicidal folly the Government marshalled against itself the whole intellectual strength of the nation. The Monarchy, the aristocracy, the Church, joined hand-in-hand to crush out thought; the waves of their anger struck against the mighty rock of the brain of France, and though at times the spray dashed over it, and the torrent hid it for a moment, yet the waves only fell shattered time after time at its base, until at last they foamed away in the receding tide of exile which ebbed from the shores of France.

As literature had become palsied by the sunshine of court favour, so did it regain vigour in the shades of court disgrace. No longer enervated by the hot-house atmosphere of Royal patronage, the tree of thought struck deep its roots, and spread wide its branches. Fresh vigour was inspired by cruel oppression; vaguely conscious of danger from all freedom of thought, the Government

¹ *Histoire de la Révolution*, Louis Blanc, pp 101, 102. Ed. 1847.

struck at it whenever it appeared. Voltaire wrote simple history—the circulation of the book was forbidden; he wrote against innate ideas—the Church scented heresy, the author was arrested, the book was burned; he wrote on Newton—book was forbidden publication; Helvetius wrote on the mind—book was burned; Buffon wrote on geology—compelled to retract; Darigrand wrote on finance—book was suppressed; De Lolme wrote on the British Constitution—book was prohibited; Garlon wrote on therapeutics—book was destroyed; Diderot wrote that people “who are born blind have some ideas different from those who are possessed of their eyesight”—Diderot himself was seized, and thrown into Vincennes.¹ At last the Government, to conclude the affair, forbade the publication of any work which dealt with the principles of Government, and the author of a book which was likely to excite the public mind, of a book attacking religion, or of a book on finance, was to suffer death. The effect of all was soon apparent. every book condemned to be burnt had its success ensured, and crowds rushed to buy what roused the fear of the Government. Thought grew stronger and bolder; the Bastille acted as a spur; persecution as an inspiration; literary activity became enormous, and progress was made in every direction. The Government, which shielded the Church, became itself the

¹ *History of Civilisation*, Buckle, vol. ii, pp. 230—242. Ed 1869.

object of attack. Those who had thundered against spiritual abuses now turned all their weapons against temporal; the storm broke against the State. Every great revolution in the State is thus heralded by a revolt against the Church. Free-thought in religion is always the precursor of free action in politics; never yet has the human mind revolted against the tyranny of the priest and failed to revolt against the tyranny of the Monarch. When, in any country which is not wholly free, there is a rapid spread of Freethought principles, then may the people look for political change; when men use their brains to investigate the rights of the Church, they will use them also to investigate the rights of the Government; when spiritual despotism is defied, temporal despotism will be speedily challenged; the blows which batter the palace of the bishop will soon resound on the palace of the Monarch, and the battle-axe sharpened to strike the mitre of the prelate will soon be aimed at the diadem of the King. The second grand step which made the Revolution possible was the endeavour of the Government, the aristocracy, and the Church, to crush out thought, and the consequent attacks made upon all by the whole intellectual force of France.

The part played by Freethought in producing the Revolution is utterly misrepresented by prejudiced and bigoted historians. The horrors of the Reign of Terror, of the *noyades*, of the September

massacres, are all laid to the charge of "Atheism," with a bland ignorance which is curious and edifying. People read the works of Voltaire, of Rousseau, of Diderot, of d'Holbach, are shocked at their opinions, and cry out: "Such writings will inevitably produce bloody revolutions and popular violence." Alison remarks that "little was to be expected of a Revolution which commenced with a library bequeathed to a young Infidel by an old courtesan,"¹ because Ninon de l'Enclos, in her will, left Voltaire 2,000 francs with which to buy books. He speaks as though the horrors of the Revolution could be traced back to such an incident; one cannot help adding: "Little can be expected of a historian who can write such rubbish". [Free-thought *did* aid in bringing about the Revolution. It was one of its impelling causes—and why? Because it taught the people to use their brains; because it led them to think; because it roused them to a consciousness of their degradation, and awoke the sense of shame. The Freethinkers made freedom possible by unveiling her beauty to the eyes of France.] Their passionate cry for Liberty—liberty of thought, liberty of expression, liberty of action, was echoed back from a thousand hearts. In every human breast there is a chord which is strung to Liberty's key-note, and which sounds out strongly and joyously if touched by the hand of one of her musicians; the string is *there*, although as yet no

¹ *History of Europe*, Alison, vol. i, p. 86.

note has come from it; the music is there, although as yet it be unawakened, and the master-hand which strikes the key-note hears his melody re-echoed from a million strings, which he has not *made*, but which he has the skill to touch. The moment that Liberty becomes realised, that moment also does Liberty become possible; and Freethought made Liberty a living ideal in France. Were it as true as it is false that Freethought should have the whole of the Revolution imposed upon it, all the agony, all the tumult, all the bloodshed, *even then* humanity would owe a debt of gratitude to Freethought, for that Revolution swept away the centuried misery of France, and—like the keen knife of the surgeon—cut out the cancer which otherwise would have poisoned the life-blood, and have resulted in inevitable death. But it is false—shamelessly false—that the bloodshed of the Revolution was due to the Freethought which made that Revolution possible. The bloodshed was simply the reaping of the seed of misery sown broadcast by the Throne, by the aristocracy, by the Church. The bloodshed was the revenge of the suffering, cruel and brutal, as was the oppression which occasioned it. A Comte de Charolois, in the reign of Louis XIV, had amused himself with shooting down the peasantry, and had laughed, as they rolled heavily to the ground from the tops of steep-roofed cottages, which they had been mending the moment before. The sons of the murdered peasants learnt

the lesson, and repeated it, laughing, to the sons of the murderer. Nobles had hunted down the peasants in idle sport, as a new and exciting pastime; the children of the peasants chased the children of the nobles out of France. Was the revenge just? Yes: it was absolutely just, as between man and man; but *it was not the noblest which might have been*. In England, when the Republic comes, we look to the people to be nobler than the aristocracy, to be true to their own inborn nobility, and not to follow the base example of the oppressors. The nobles robbed England of the land of England by the disgraceful act of 12 Car. II; when the English people resume their right, they must not copy the shameful robbery of the land-owners. They must magnanimously buy back that which is rightfully their own, because they have been sharers, accomplices in the robbery, by allowing it to take place, and it is unrighteous to revenge upon the few the crime which has become possible only by the cowardice of the many. Yet, acknowledging the error of the people, striving to make our English nation grander than the class which, by tyranny, *makes* revolutions, I deny that much personal blame is to be cast upon the wildest spirits, even of the Reign of Terror; when a people has been brutalised, the acts will be brutal; according to the cruelty of the pressure will be the cruelty of the rebound; according to the disgrace of the oppression will be the disgrace of the revolt. To

Freethought is due the glory, that the tyranny which preceded the Revolution was, for ever, made impossible in France. To the tyranny—and to the tyranny only—is due the shame which stained Liberty's feet in the blood of the oppressors, and which veiled the glory of her radiance with the foul mists which arose from the swamp of bitter pain.

Political economy was now the subject of the day, and Rousseau began to mould the young political thought of France. 'The *Contrat Social* is a milestone on the road to Freedom. It is a book much talked of, but little read.' It came as a revelation to France, because it proclaimed those undeniable truths which man responds to, when enunciated, almost without demonstration. Rousseau begins by saying: "I will try to find out whether, in civil order, there is any certain and legitimate rule of Government, taking men as they are, laws as they might be . . . Do you ask if I am prince, or legislator, that I write on Polity? no: but because I am neither, I write. Were I prince, or legislator, I would not lose time in saying what ought to be done. I would do it, or else I would keep silence." The foundation stone of this book is, that "man is born free, but is in fetters everywhere". Society is based on the family, but the family bond is only "natural" so long as the children require help from the parents, and render obedience in exchange for protection: "the people are imaged

¹ See throughout, *Œuvres de Rousseau*, t. 2. Ed. 1782.

by the children, the chief by the father, and all being born free and equal they alienate their liberty only for the sake of utility." But men say that authority is derived from God. "I confess it: but all sickness also comes from Him. Are we therefore forbidden to search for remedies?" "To renounce liberty is to renounce manhood: it is to renounce the rights of humanity; yes; it is to renounce its duties." Grotius allows that a people is a people, before choosing its king. From the people only arises, then, the sovereignty. "To find such a form of association as shall defend and protect, with the common strength, the person and the goods of each associate, and by which, each uniting himself to all, really only obeys himself, and remains as free as he was before; such is the fundamental problem of which the social contract is the solution." "What man loses by the social contract is natural liberty, and an unlimited right to grasp at everything which he desires and can seize. What he gains is civil liberty, and the right of keeping all that he possesses." "Instead of destroying natural equality, that compact substitutes a moral and legitimate equality for that physical inequality which Nature produces between man and man; for men, who are unequal in strength and in genius, become equal by law and by right." Such was the note struck by Rousseau, and it echoed throughout France: what? was it true that men were born free? Was it then no law of Nature, but only a

man-made law, that the poor should toil and starve, while the noble idled and luxuriated? If so, then might this state of things be altered, and man, being man, might triumph. "What was Sovereignty? It was not a convention of superior and inferior: it was a convention of the whole with each of its members." What, then, was Royalty: not a divinely-born power, but a power drawing its right to rule only from the consent of the ruled, and removable at their will. Kings then lived for the good of the people; but the French kings? they were living only for themselves; then were they no true kings at all, but usurpers, rightfully to be removed. Rousseau spoke too of a "Republic"; what was that? it was "a State, ruled by law, *under any form of administration, so that public interest ruled* . . . Every legitimate government is Republican". Thus did the thought *Republic* become identical with Liberty in the heart of France, and the Republic became the ideal of all, because it meant the liberty of each. These thoughts, amplified, perfected, shown in many lights, became the beacon-flame of the new worshippers of Freedom. This was the "gospel of Jean Jacques Rousseau," which spread, with lightning speed, through the length and breadth of France, and was the watchword of the army of Liberty. Robespierre fed on this, and became fanatic, cruel and ruthless, as all fanatics. All who suffered tried to spell it out; conscious of deliverance that might be, they

struggled blindly towards the light. Honour Rousseau, spite of his weakness, all ye who love humanity; honour the man who sang to Liberty, even though his notes ring hollow from time to time; revere the lips that spake such mighty truths, even though the lips be stained with folly's kisses, and be impure from the touch of the lips that soil in the contact. Rousseau's weakness was the weakness of his time, of his circumstances. His strength was that glorious clarion tone which rang through his voice to France, and aroused the sleeping people to the consciousness that they were—or might be—a nation.

Simultaneously with this, the Monarchy began to withdraw its support from the Church, and, too late, to endeavour to limit the power of the clergy, thus committing the fatal mistake of weakening its now only friend. The Church was the more unable to bear up against this policy from the weakness resulting from her own internal divisions. She had become divided into two great parties, each of whom struck at the other with a fury and a bitterness engendered only by theological strife; the Jesuits led by Molina, had been, during the reign of Louis XIV, the champions of free will and of Church unity, the zealous defenders of priestly authority and of rigid sacerdotalism; the Jansenists, taking their name from Cornelius Jansen, Bishop of Ypres, contended, no less earnestly, for the Calvinistic dogma of predestination, and were consequently

necessitarians. These latter were ever the lovers of freedom, and were the liberal element in the French Church; and it is an historical fact worth noting that the teachers of what is philosophically termed Necessity have ever been on the side of Liberty, while the believers in Free Will have ever been found in the ranks of tyranny. The liberal movement now sweeping through France was aided and strengthened, however unconsciously, by this Jansenist party in the Church, and the destruction of the order of Jesuits in 1762 was one more nail driven into the coffin of the Church and of the Crown. These internal dissensions, and the anti-ecclesiastical policy of the Government, were both alike important steps towards making the Revolution possible.

But if all these causes smoothed the way for the Revolution, there is yet one other important point which must not be left out of consideration, and that is the series of conflicts between the King and the Parliaments. These Parliaments were "provincial assemblies, composed entirely of magistrates of rank from the order of the nobility, the *Tiers État* raised by office to that station; intrusted chiefly with judicial duties, but constituting, in the absence of the States-General, which had not been assembled since 1614, the only subsisting check recognised by the constitution on the authority of the Sovereign".¹ The chief coercive power possessed

¹ *History of Europe*, Alison, vol. i. p. 72. Ed. 1853.

by these Parliaments was somewhat analogous to the power used with such good effect by our Commons under Charles I; they—to a certain extent—held the strings of the public purse, for they had the right of registering the King's edicts, and no tax was constitutional until the edict imposing it was registered by the Parliament of the district affected. The King had one source left against this refusal—*i.e.*, the holding of what was called a *lit de justice*; the King might, by going to the place where the refractory Parliament was sitting, command the registration of his own edict. The Parliament of Paris was, naturally, the most important of all these bodies, and it played a signal part in the early days of the Revolution. The Parliaments and the Crown, always more or less antagonistic to each other, became bitterly hostile during the Jesuit and Jansenist controversy. The prelates of the Church sided with the Jesuits, and the archbishop of Paris interdicted the Jansenists; the Parliament of Paris advocated the party which was antagonistic to the Court, and prosecuted the clergy who obeyed the archbishop. The Crown interfered and stopped the prosecutions; the Parliament declined to administer justice, and all legal actions were at a standstill. The Crown commanded it to carry on business; the Parliament attached the revenues of the archbishop. The Crown resorted to *lettres de cachet* against the most refractory members, exiled the remainder, and organised new

courts of justice. The letters patent were not valid until registered; no one would register. The Provincial Parliaments supported the Paris Parliament, and a dead-lock ensued.¹ Finally the Parliaments triumphed over the Church and the Crown, and one more step was taken in the path which led to Revolution. The Parliaments had discovered that they could hold their own against the Sovereign, and it was not long before this discovery was put to good account. For a time, indeed, they were suppressed; in 1771 the Monarchy strove, once more, to rid itself of this sharp curb on its extravagance. The Duc de Choiseul had been deprived of his premiership at the suit of Madame du Barri, and the Duc d'Aguillon, her creature, was put in his place; urged by these, and by the Chancellor Maupeou, the King bade the Parliaments pass a resolution that they were in duty bound to register any and every edict sent to them by the King. They refused to do so, declaring they would rather perish in support of the law than consent to destroy it. On the 21st of January, 1771, each member was arrested, and sent into exile, and the Chief Parliaments of the realm quickly shared the fate of that of Paris. Thus arbitrarily were destroyed for a time the Parliaments of France, but they returned to aid in making the Revolution.²

¹ *History of Europe*, Alison, vol. i, pp. 73, 74.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 118, 114.

Such, briefly and imperfectly stated, were the various movements which made the Revolution possible ; we must now learn what it was that made the Revolution inevitable, and which sharpened the knife of the guillotine. The ever-increasing deficit in the finances, and the consequently ever-increasing burden of taxation, falling lightly on the rich and heavily on the poor ; the intense misery of the mass of the people, contrasted with the unbridled luxury of the nobility and the higher clergy ; the complete severance between these privileged orders and the rest of the nation ; the fearful corruption of the court ; these were the things which made the Revolution inevitable.

The financial deficit, and the heavy taxation which was its necessary accompaniment, lay at the root of most of the misery of the people. Efforts had been made from time to time to extinguish the constantly-growing debt of the Government, but every attempt had failed. Paper in tons was cast into the yawning gulf, but the paper was worthless, because irredeemable : the debt grew and grew. A large National Debt is sometimes said to be a source of safety to the State, because it interests so many in the stability of the Government ; but a National Debt does not only mean that many have invested their savings in Government securities. It means also heavy taxation to pay for the interest on, and management of, the Debt. Heavy taxation can be of no benefit to any country, although in times of

commercial prosperity it may be borne without arousing violent opposition. Men point to our debt with pride, and say : " How great England must be to bear such a load, and yet be prosperous " ; just so might you point to a strong swimmer, to whose neck was bound a heavy millstone ; that he can carry it, and not sink to the bottom, may, indeed, be a proof of strength which is admirable ; but were he free from the weight, he would swim the easier and the swifter, with less exertion and without painful effort. The National Debt of England is a millstone round the neck of England, under which she can struggle on to-day through smooth water, but which will make struggle agony when the storm-waves begin to buffet her. The moment that any strain is thrown upon the nation the National Debt will become a danger ; as wages sink lower, and as provisions rise higher, taxes press more heavily, and resentment grows swiftly and sullenly ; if upon this a bad harvest come, and bread is dearer ; if war breaks out, and new taxes are imposed to carry it on, then the burden which has long been painful becomes unendurable, and the thunder-clouds of the sufferings of the masses roll together, and give forth the lightning flash of Revolution.

Over France these thunder-clouds gathered thicker day by day ; taxation was draining the life of the people ; the taxes imposed upon the nobles and clergy were light ; the former, in theory at least, " defended the State by their swords, while the

latter interceded for it by their prayers ".¹ Owing to these benefits, I suppose, it was that "the two privileged orders paid whatever they pleased, the clergy a gratuitous non-collectible tax" (a charming tax, that); "the nobles contributed for certain imposts, but according to whatever they thought proper to declare, which the treasury agents registered with a bow, without either examination or verification. The neighbours had to pay so much the more."² Meanwhile the taxes imposed upon the people were crushing. The Government farmed out the taxes to officials who squeezed from the people double the sum which they paid into the treasury, and these 250,000 tax-gatherers were the scourge of France. They were authorised to employ arms to enforce the payment of taxes; they sent their unfortunate debtors to the prison, to the galleys, to the hangman's cord. They would seize, first, the linen drying on the hedgerows; then the furniture of the defaulter. This not sufficing, they would take the doors of the cottages off their hinges, the tiles from the roof, and would even pull down the house, in order to carry off the heavy beams and the planks. "I have known poor people sell their beds and lie upon straw; sell their pots, kettles, and all their necessary household goods, to content the unmerciful collectors of the King's taxes."³ In

¹ *History of Europe*, Alison, vol. i, p. 85.

² *History of the French Revolution*, Michelet, tr. by Cocks, vol. i, p. 61.

³ *Somers' Tracts*, vol. x, p. 264, as quoted by Buckle.

Burgundy, we find it reported in an official document that the pressure had been so great that the poor "could not buy wheat or barley; they had to live on oats, to nourish themselves on grass, and even to die of hunger".¹ It was one of these farmers of taxes, Foulon by name, who, when told that the people had not money to buy bread, answered: "Then let them eat grass," and who, on the outbreak of the Revolution of force, was hanged by the Parisians with a tuft of grass in his mouth, first victim of the *lanterne*. You call this act the blood-lust of a mob? I call it the righteous sentence of a long-suffering, but at last indignant, people, who, after long patience, and finding that all justice is denied them, arise in their resistless strength, and judge in their own cause. A few details as to the taxation are necessary, in order to appreciate the weight which the people of France flung off at the Revolution. The *taille*, a heavy tax imposed on the produce only of the land in some parts, and in others falling on the whole personal property, was one of the most burdensome of the Royal taxes. If the produce of an acre of land was "worth £3 2s. 7d., the proportion which went to the King was £1 18s. 4d.; that to the landlord, 18s.; that to the actual cultivator, 5s."² Then came the poll-tax, three-quarters of the total of which was, in the time of Neckar, paid by the poor. Next came the

¹ *Histoire de la Révolution*, Louis Blanc, p. 181.

² *History of Europe*, Alison, vol. i, p. 96.

vingtième, a tax introduced by Louis XIV, which was originally a demand for every tenth penny, but which was continually raised, and which varied with the needs of the Crown. Then came the *aides*, the taxes on food, among which was the tax on wines, a tax so heavy that the vine-growers rooted up their vines, and ceased to cultivate. Next, most cruel of all, perhaps, came the *gabelle*, the salt tax. This varied much in different provinces, and its weight may be estimated by the fact that we find salt selling in Artois at $3\frac{1}{2}$ francs the *quintal*, Artois being a free province; while in Amiens, where was *la grande gabelle*, the same quantity was sold for 62 francs. As much smuggling of salt naturally took place under these circumstances, an order was promulgated that every person over seven years of age must buy yearly seven pounds of salt at the King's storehouse. The pockets of the people were still further emptied by the intricate sub-division of the country into districts, each of which had its custom-house, and its scale of duties on imports and exports. As though all this were not enough, the Governments, having wrung all the money they could out of the people, next demanded their unpaid labour, and, on certain days in each year, the Royal officers went through the country, seized the peasants, and drove them in troops to labour on the public roads. No payment was given for the work, and the unfortunate road-menders had to exist, as best they might, on the bread which they could beg

from the charitable during their hours of rest. If the work were badly done—and the peasants were, naturally, ignorant about road-making—they were again seized to repair the imperfect work. This feudal right was termed the *corvée*, and was most bitterly resented by the people.

Under these circumstances it can hardly be wondered at that the mass of the French nation was sunk in the extremest poverty. History is too apt to concern itself only with courts and wars, save when the agony of the people forces itself into notice during revolt. Dazzled, perhaps, by the glitter of the French court, the spectators fail to see that, while the froth on the surface of the nation sparkled brilliantly and danced gaily in the sunshine, the waves of the masses rolled in turbulence below. The French nation consisted of twenty-five millions of human beings. Of these twenty-five millions, 150,000 individuals monopolised all the places of profit, all the commissions in the army above the grade of lieutenant, and almost, if not quite, all the prizes of the Church. Between the privileged orders and the commonalty a great gulf was fixed. The few possessed all the luxuries and all the privileges, whilst of the odd twenty-four and five-sixth millions the vast majority lacked even the necessaries of life, and all lacked justice. Groaning under the terrible taxation, the misery of the people was not yet complete. The key to every profession, to every trade, was in the

hand of a corporation, which jealously guarded its monopoly by stringent regulations, and which was duly supported by the Crown, which drew fees from each step of the candidate for work. Each master might only have one apprentice, and when the young learner had found a master, he had to serve *at least* seven years as apprentice, and fourteen as mate, before he was permitted to exercise his trade for himself. The apprenticeship fees cost at least £20, and the entrance-fees to the mastership some £80 in addition. Such were the difficulties placed in the way of those who wished to work as mechanics, and without surmounting these no man might labour as carpenter, as blacksmith, as joiner.¹ The suffering of the peasants was yet further augmented by the regular drawings for service in the militia, a service of which the peasantry appear to have had the extremest horror. There was no hope in the future to brighten the lot of the conscript; all military honour could only be gained by the noble. The peasant might die for France, but might never share her glory.

The feudal burdens put the last touch to the sufferings of the poor. These are almost indescribable, so various were they and so terrible. The game laws checked all agriculture. Wild boars and deer were permitted to range the country, feeding on the crops, but sacred from destruction. Hoeing and weeding were forbidden, lest the game

¹ See *Histoire de la Révolution*, Louis Blanc, p. 148.

should be disturbed and the eggs destroyed. The mowing of hay was delayed to shelter the young peasants and partridges; the stubble must be left long in order to give cover to the birds; the use of manure was regulated so as not to injure the flavour of the game. Any infraction of these edicts was visited with prison or the galleys. The people were not permitted to grind their own corn, to bake their own bread, or to press their own grapes, except at the places prepared for such purposes by their feudal superiors. They might be ordered by their lords to beat the marshes all night long to prevent the frogs from croaking, and from disturbing the slumberers in the castle. Personal services of all kinds were demanded of them by their masters. The first kiss of the bride belonged of right to the feudal superior, and—blackest of all shames—the lord had the right to claim as his the serf's wife ere her husband had embraced her, and to pass her on dishonoured to the man who had won her love. The poverty of the miserable people grew year after year; the bread they ate was once shown to Louis XV—it was made of fern. The Bishop of Chartres told him that in his diocese the men browsed with the sheep. Frequent famines occurred; the tax-gatherers seized the cattle of the peasants, and as the cattle disappeared the land grew poorer for lack of manure. The peasants yoked themselves to the plough when the beasts were gone; the cultivation of corn decreased, and

where it was still grown it was less in quantity and inferior in quality.¹ One other phase of misery remained, even below this miserable peasantry; from the ranks of the peasantry were recruited the army of the beggars. This lowest depth of wretchedness was becoming yearly more and more largely tenanted. Houses of detention had been built for the reception of this vagabond class, and each of these "became a hot-bed of hideous diseases". In 1767 50,000 beggars were arrested; and, the houses of detention being filled, they opened the hospitals, the houses of mercy, the common prisons. By 1777 the number had risen to 1,200,000, and they would no longer be locked up. In every village they surrounded the passing carriage and cried for bread. Diseased and ragged, they wandered throughout France, the living witness of her misery, and the ghastly warning of her agony. "Stealing or begging all day, sleeping in barns, drifting along the roads and about the country. they arrived at last at some great centre of population, and there they found that mendicancy had become an order, ranged in regiments under its own chiefs."² Who can say how much these armies, avengers of the death-agonies of thousands of the starved, added to the horrors of Paris and of Lyons! The nation who sows such seed must expect to reap such harvest.

¹ See *History of the Revolution*, Michelet, tr. by Cooks pp. 42, 43.

² See *Histoire de la Révolution*, Louis Blanc, pp. 148, 149.

While the people were agonising thus, what was the condition of the nobles and the clergy? The clergy, in number 80,000, held one-fifth of the land of France, and owned some £160,000,000 of property. The mass of this went to the clerical nobles, to the bishops and the abbés who flaunted at the court. The curates, who did the work, were—as among ourselves—miserably underpaid. The nobles, as we have said, numbered some 150,000 individuals, and this comparatively small class was cut off from the rest of the nation by its privileges, and by its exemptions from State burdens. No mutual sympathy bound class to class. The nobles bitterly despised the populace, and the populace bitterly hated the nobles. The one class feasted, while the other starved; the one class was drunken, while the other was athirst. To the peasant in the hovel, the noble in the castle was the palpable embodiment of the oppression which was crushing him to death. While the noble claimed liberty as his birthright, the claim to liberty of the peasant was deemed a presumption. A great gulf yawned between the nobles and the people, a gulf which the Revolution spanned with the bodies of the aristocrats, and the class which held itself above the nation was denied, by a just retribution, its rights as part of the nation. This privileged class, living in a luxury that was of itself insulting to the starving, filled full its cup of criminality by making that luxury still more repulsive by its unbridled

license. The worst days of imperial Rome were reproduced in Paris and in Versailles. The Regent—so-called ruler of France during the minority of Louis XV—shocked even the most shameless by his terrible debauchery. A libertine from his very childhood, he became the scandal of Paris, making the very name of the Palais Royal offensive in the ears of the people. Charged with the direction of affairs, he allowed them to be decided upon by the dancers of the Opera who shared his orgies. With the honour of France in his hands, he let that honour be at the whim of the most abandoned women. Later, the Duc de Chartres carried on the tradition of shame. The reports of his private suppers are almost too hideous for repetition. One sentence, to show the rulers of France, must suffice as a specimen of the whole story. This Duc de Chartres, afterwards Duc d'Orléans, built himself a house, which he named Chartres' Folly, and to this place were conveyed at night from 100 to 150 of the boldest and most immodest prostitutes. Their eyes were bandaged on the way, and when released they found themselves in a room where was spread a gorgeous supper. Stripped of all clothing, they sat down to this feast, and, maddened by fiery wines, the scenes that ensued may be guessed.¹ What wonder that the whole court should be corrupt when Royalty set such an example, and

¹ *Règne de Louis XVI*, Soulaire, vol. ii, pp. 108, 104, quoted by Alison.

where the King himself, the fountain of honour, reigned supreme in vileness. Mistress after mistress he had, until Madame de Pompadour fascinated him and ruled him for twenty years, until she died in 1764. But how ruled him? As her early charms faded, and the Monarch began to sigh for novelty, she became the sultana of his harem. She¹ invented the Parc aux Cerfs, the foulest thought that ever entered woman's brain; and there, night after night, the fairest young girls she could find were brought to the King, in order that they might be the toys of a moment, while her own permanent influence remained untouched. A secret police was kept to watch for the most beautiful and the youngest maidens; and these, either bought or kidnapped, were carried to their ruin, the King—pious Catholic through all—watching them while they told their beads, that so, though he ruined the bodies, he might save the souls. The seizures of young girls were so frequent that the popular indignation ran high. It becomes rumoured that the doctors have ordered the King to take baths of human blood to revivify his constitution, exhausted by excesses. Paris rises in revolt; children have disappeared, mothers are weeping, while fathers grind their teeth. The lieutenant of police flies; the soldiers are called out; "some of the rioters are hanged," and the tumult is stilled—for a time.¹ Madame du Barri succeeds Madame de Pompadour,

¹ *Histoire de la Révolution*, Louis Blanc, pp. 129, 181.

and Royalty falls yet lower. The officers of Government are given to her creatures; her negro dwarf, Zamore, is made governor of a castle; the Prime Minister is dismissed to do her pleasure. At last the end comes. A girl of fourteen is led to the Royal couch. She has contracted small-pox, as yet not manifest, and the seeds of the disease are transmitted to the King. Blood-poisoned from debauchery, the malady consumes him like fire; his limbs rot away. The odour is so fearful that the wing of the palace where he lies is deserted. All fly from him save his long-despised daughters. By the 4th of May the Du Barri herself is gone. Prayers are uttered, masses are said, extreme unction is given. The King is sorry "for any scandal he may have given"; that he will give no more is manifest. The 10th of May, 1774, is here, and the King of France is breathing his last. The courtiers—safe out of reach of infection—are waiting to hail the new sovereigns. The Royal life flickers, flickers, goes out "Long live the King" is heard at Versailles, answered by a sound of weeping from a Dauphin and a Dauphiness, "too young to govern," and the time for government is gone by. The Monarchy is dying inch by inch, and the new King is to be a victim, not a ruler. One ominous phrase was heard in Paris, after the great procession to St. Geneviève for the King's life had been tried—the last resource of piety—and yet the King was dead. One observed that the procession of the

shrine seemed to have lost its efficacy. "What happier effect could it have produced," said another, "*is he not dead ?*"¹

¹ *History of the Revolution*, Moore, vol. i, p. 20. Ed. 1795.

LECTURE II

FROM THE ACCESSION OF LOUIS XVI TO THE ASSEMBLY OF THE STATES-GENERAL

ON May 10th, 1774, Louis XVI ascended the Throne of France; on May 5th, 1789, the States-General assembled which were to destroy the Throne. The time that lies between these two dates is that with which we have to deal in the present lecture. Louis XVI was the grandson of his predecessor, and was the eldest of those three brothers who all ruled France in turn: Louis, Duc de Berri, became Dauphin, and Louis XVI; Louis, Comte de Provence, commonly called *Monsieur*, became Louis XVIII; Charles, Comte d'Artois, *Monseigneur*, became Charles X. The young King was aged twenty, the Queen eighteen, when they ascended the Throne, after three years of married life as Dauphin and Dauphiness. Louis was grave, reserved, studious, kindly-hearted, shy, heavy; he disliked festivity, and found his chief amusements in the chase and in smithwork;

withal, he was fond of power, though in clumsy fashion, jealous of his prerogative, desiring, yet too indolent, to rule. The Queen, the daughter of the warrior-Empress, Maria Theresa, was gay, careless, exquisitely lovely; charming all by her grace and vivacity; attracting some, alienating others, by her dislike of etiquette and of court ceremonial. Round her gathered the youth of the court, and her presence was synonymous with brightness and with mirth. Nor was she altogether heartless; the white hand that scattered gold in thoughtless profusion to gild a court *fête* was also open to relieve any need which came under her eyes. Many a gentle deed and kindly word are recorded of Marie Antoinette during the sunshiny days of Versailles and of the Trianon. Gifts of fuel and of food oftentimes gladdened the poor cottages near the Palace, during the bitter winter, when the men and women were starving throughout France; and the feeling towards the young Sovereign was for a while warm and strong.¹ When, in 1777, her brother, the Emperor Joseph, visited France, and was enthusiastically welcomed, all was bright and gay, so far as court eyes could see; there were shouting crowds, loud huzzas, gay decorations, wherever he went. He "took leave of Versailles, leaving his sister happy, and everywhere the object of regard; France at

¹ See *Memoirs of Maria Antoinette*, Weber, tr. by Dallas, vol. i. Ed. 1805. Weber must, however, be read with many grains of salt.

peace, and replete with hope; the King intent upon the public welfare, and idolised; the nation tranquil, never thinking even of a possibility of being agitated; society full of charms, and arts of every kind contesting which should shed the brightest lustre on the reign of Louis XVI and Maria Antoinetta".¹ Even as late as 1786, when the King visited Normandy, he was everywhere received with marks of the most passionate attachment. We find him writing to his Queen: "The love of my people has gone to the bottom of my heart; judge if I am not the happiest King in the world."² And yet—in spite of such facts as these—people prattle as though the stability of a Monarchy were ensured by the huzzas of a crowd. A Shah of Persia is loudly cheered; but England would go to war with him, if need were, on the morrow of the *fête*. A Prince of Wales visits Sheffield, and the streets are gaily decorated, and a holiday is given by the employers, and the artisans crowd the streets, and stare at the show, and shout for the gay procession and prancing steeds; the next day leading articles appear in all the papers, dwelling on the loyalty exhibited by the people, and the folly of the Republican dream, cheer-proved a chimera. So they crowded round the fair Queen of France, and her "milk-white horses"; so they cheered King Louis, whenever they caught a glimpse of his heavy, good-tempered

¹ *Memoirs*, Weber, vol. i p. 47.

² *Ibid.*, p. 21, notes to chap. i.

face ; and flowers, and flags, and wreathing hailed them when they visited their metropolis ; and in a few years' time the shouts were turned into hootings, the smiles into scowls, the flower-arch of triumph into the guillotine-arch of death.

Truly, these first years of Louis were a very age of hope. Philosophy was triumphant in popular opinion ; Voltaire, coming to Paris and visiting a theatre, was half-smothered in roses ; the lecture halls of professors were browded with fashionable women. "The largest and the most difficult inquiries found favour in the eyes of those whose fathers had hardly heard the name of the sciences to which they belonged. The brilliant imagination of Buffon made geology suddenly popular ; the same thing was effected for chemistry by the eloquence of Fourcroy, and for electricity by Nollet ; while the admirable expositions of Lalande caused astronomy itself to be generally cultivated."¹ Ranks began to draw together, and the middle classes became impatient of the political ascendancy of the nobles. "What had been submitted to by men when poor and ignorant, was not so easily brooked by the same class when they found themselves richer, and thought themselves wiser, than many of those who were ranked their superiors."² "As long as the different classes confined themselves to

¹ *History of Civilisation*, Buckle, vol. ii, p. 408.

² *View of the Causes, etc., of the French Revolution*, J. Moore, vol. i, p. 25. Ed. 1795. *

pursuits peculiar to their own sphere, they were encouraged to preserve their separate habits; and the subordination—or, as it were, the hierarchy—of society was easily maintained. But when the members of the various orders met in the same place, with the same object, they became knit together by a new sympathy . . . Besides this, there was also given to them not only a new pursuit, but also a new standard of merit. In the amphitheatre and the lecture room the first object of attention is the professor and the lecturer. The division is between those who teach and those who learn. The subordination of ranks makes way for the subordination of knowledge. The petty and conventional distinctions of fashionable life are succeeded by those large and genuine distinctions, by which alone man is really separated from man . . . The hall of science is the temple of Democracy. Those who come to learn confess their own ignorance. abrogate in some degree their own superiority, and begin to perceive that the greatness of men has no connection with the splendour of their titles, or the dignity of their birth . . . but that it depends upon the largeness of their minds, the powers of their intellect, and the fullness of their knowledge." ¹ Thus had Freethought engendered Science, and Science gave birth to Democracy. Now first also appeared the tendency to form clubs, which became so strong during the progress of the Revolution.

¹ *History of Civilisation*, Buckle, vol. ii, pp. 409, 410.

The first club was a purely social one, founded in 1782; but they multiplied rapidly, and became political, and were soon the centres from which spread, in all directions, the currents of revolutionary thought.

As though to change liberty of thought into liberty of action, and to make the love of freedom practical as well as theoretical, came the revolt of the American colonies from England. Those rebellious upstarts, refusing to take their proper place as part of the borough of East Greenwich, Kent, represented as such in the British Parliament, and, therefore, duly taxable with other represented boroughs, had made tea in a novel and reprehensible fashion in Boston Harbour. Persisting in their reckless course, they had had the impertinence to defeat British soldiers, to proclaim their independence, to ask aid from France. In 1778 a treaty was drawn up between France and America, and a crowd of the noblest French youth rushed into the struggle of freedom against despotism, of a nation against its King. Liberty triumphed, and the young soldiers came home, with the star of America on their breasts, with the throb of American Republicanism in their hearts, with the "Declaration of the Rights of Man" in their hands. The young Marquis de Lafayette had fought for six years in America, and had learnt liberty from George Washington's lips; he returned to his native country, burning to make the French a nation instead of a conglomeration

of nobles and serfs From his lips rang out that famous declaration which will never be forgotten. "Insurrection is the most sacred of duties when oppression is at its height" ¹ His youth, his courage, his patriotism, awoke the popular enthusiasm, while his rank and his grace made him welcome at the court. He was caressed by the Queen, courted by her train, nobles and citizens vied with each other in doing him homage, his bust was placed in the Hotel de Ville, he was welcomed and feted wherever he went. And who was this man, the praised, the honoured, the glorified? He was a man who had helped to found a Republic, who had aided a people to break the yoke of their King. Let England remember with pride her share in the earlier days of the Revolution, since she did so much to shame and to destroy it in later times. From her the impulse which inspired Freedom's writers, and showed Liberty to France, from her the impulse also which precipitated the Revolution, from her, in truth, for just as the examples of the elder English Republicans taught French thinkers the duties of a King and the rights of a people, so did the example of their children in America show how freedom might be won in the eighteenth century as in the seventeenth, English were they, those gallant rebel colonists, true British oak to the heart's core, Britons, who showed their race in

¹ *Annals of the French Revolution*, Bertrand de Moleville, tr. by Dallas, vol. 1 p. xiv, introduction. Ed. 1800

their dauntless heroism, and redeemed the British name from the disgrace brought on it in Europe by the German princelings, who—for a time—hide the old glory of England from the eyes of the world.

The popular enthusiasm for America bore fruit in all directions. In 1778 the Parliament of Rouen, forbidden to resign, sent in its resignation to the King, prefaced with the line :

Injustice at last produces independence.

Later on, the Theatre of Versailles rang with applause at the words in one of Voltaire's plays : "I am the son of Brutus, and I bear, engraved in my heart, liberty and the hatred of Kings." Thus did the shout of Faneuil Hall re-echo in the corridors of Versailles, and a King dethroned in America, paved the way for a King guillotined on the Place de Grève.

The reign of justice has commenced, as well as that of knowledge and of liberty. The King will have back the exiled Parliament of Paris, spite of warnings of brothers, nay, spite of tears of aunts, praying him not to recall a body which had been dismissed in disgrace by his grandfather. M. de Maurepas, the Prime Minister, favoured the re-establishment of the legitimate Parliament, and the abolition of the courts put by Louis XV in its room. The Duc d'Orléans and his son, the Duc de Chartres, were on the same side; Maurepas dismissed the three leading ministers who were opposed to this act of justice, and put in their places Turgot,

Miromesnil, and Malesherbes, and on October 21st, 1774, the exiled Parliament was recalled. The King was more popular than ever; the Queen, through the following winter, more beloved. But a startling incident breaks into the shouting and the joyance. Sudden, into Versailles, pours a motley crowd. It is May 2nd, 1776, and a multitude is outside the courtyards of the château; ragged, unkempt, squalid, haggard with want, a crowd of scarecrows; they shout for the King, not to cheer him for his goodness, to them problematical enough, but to cry to him for bread. Turgot has altered the Corn Laws—wisely altered them—but his action is entirely misunderstood. These people are starving, are famishing, are perishing. The King appears and gazes upon them, somewhat bewildered apparently; the Queen's charity cannot cope with this. No kid-glove remedies seem to the point, and, withal, the crowd lacks beauty, has nought of picturesqueness in its misery. The King hesitates; tries to settle the price of bread. His ministers urge steadiness in face of danger; finally he gives no bread, but he gives the answer of Royalty: "a new gallows, forty feet high" for two of them, and bayonet-steel to teach the rest that they are out of place in court. The answer flies through France, and is silently recorded, out deep into hearts which are being misery-hardened into stone.

Two streams of events are now distinctly apparent, sometimes intermingling their waters for a

moment, but both flowing in parallel lines to the one end—the fall of the Monarchy of France. These are the Queen's growing influence and growing unpopularity; the ever-increasing national deficit, compelling the assemblage of the States-General. For clearness' sake, we will treat these two separately.

The King and Queen had been married for seven years before a child was born to them. It was well known that the King was physically incapable of giving an heir to France, and that, in consequence, the Crown would pass to his brother on his death. It had been imagined that he would not have married, and the ambition of the Comte de Provence made him, from the day of her entry into France, as Dauphiness, the enemy of Marie Antoinette. The success of his slanders, first hinted, then whispered, then spread more boldly, was much aided by the imprudence of the young Queen. Young and fond of pleasure, united to a grave and indifferent husband, engrossed in his hunting, or in his lock-making, careless of court decorum, and impatient of stately etiquette, it would have been almost impossible for Marie Antoinette to have escaped censure. Her very innocence made her the easier prey, and her thoughtlessness led her into errors that were magnified into crimes. Much of the formality of the court disappeared, and was replaced by gayer entertainments. The King and Queen gave small supper-parties, and even accepted

invitations to such reunions; the King, being disinclined for much gaiety, was often absent. The Queen had "private suppers, with dancing, where deep play was allowed, and where the usual topics of Parisian conversation, with all the vivacity and freedom of the Parisian societies, took place".¹ Masked balls were sometimes indulged in, and the windows of ball-rooms and supper-rooms opened on to the delicious gardens, where in the cool night air the guests would wander, the Queen among them, and many an idle jest occurred which gave rise to malicious suggestions. These were all strengthened and encouraged by the King's brothers, and by the Ducs d'Orléans and de Chartres—heirs of the Crown, failing the direct line—although at first the Duc d'Artois called himself her knight, and her relations with the Duc de Chartres were thought too affectionate. The visit of the Emperor Joseph, and his keen interest in French manufactures, arms, and resources, awoke some jealousy towards Austria, and a fear of Austrian influence at court; the Queen was accused of introducing changes in the fashions which was injurious to French industry, by wearing muslins and linens from abroad, instead of silks from Lyons: then was first given that fatal name which rang later from lips of mobs crying for her death, *l'Autrichienne*, the Austrian.² A blow was struck at the hopes of the Comte de Provence

¹ *View of the Causes*, etc. J. Moore, vol. i, p. 38.

² *Histoire de la Révolution*, Louis Blanc, p. 193.

by the announcement that the Queen was expecting her confinement; the skill of the doctors had triumphed over the King's incapacity, and a child was to be born to France. On December 19th, 1778, was born Maria Thérèse Charlotte, usually entitled Madame, who survived the Revolution, and was married to the Duc d'Angoulême. The birth of this child was hailed with joy by some, with anger and disappointment by others. At the baptism a grave and ominous incident took place: it was the duty of the Comte de Provence to present the child at the font, and when he did so, the officiating minister, the Cardinal de Rohan, asked what name had been chosen. "Sir," answered the Prince, drily, "that is not the first question which it is your duty to ask; you must inquire the names of the father and mother." The prelate answered that that was only necessary where doubt was possible. "Is that your opinion also?" asked the Count, turning to the Vicar of Notre Dame.¹ The doubt, thus publicly hinted, flew through Paris, and scandals of all kinds grew up around the fair fame of the Queen, till her very beauty and grace became a burden to her. One bright gleam of sunshine came to her, three years later, when on October 22nd, 1781, a Dauphin was born. The people rejoiced, though the Royal brothers were sullen; the Poissardes of Paris sent a deputation to congratulate the King: "Sire, Heaven owed a son to

¹ *Histoire de la Révolution*, Louis Blanc, p. 194.

the King, who considers his people as his family . . . Now are we sure that our children will be as happy as we, for this child must be like you. You will teach him, Sire, to be as good and just as you are, and we undertake to teach ours how people ought to respect their King."¹ Truly, deputations from Paris in later years were not all so courteous!

With the birth of her children the Queen gained much in influence with the King. She was frequently present at the Cabinet Councils; her hand was seen in the appointment of ministers; she intrigued against one, pushed forward another; proud, indomitable, brave, extravagant, she feared no opposition, and bent before no storm. Unfortunately for her, the King always failed at critical moments, and decisive measures inaugurated by her were ruined by his hesitation and feebleness; she became feared as well as hated by the party of liberty, and the storm-clouds gathered thick.

In 1785 took place that "affair of the diamond necklace," which scandalised all Europe, and of which M. de Talleyrand wrote to a friend: "Attend narrowly to that miserable affair of the necklace; I should not be surprised if it overturned the Throne."² "A Prince of the house of Rohan was accused of robbery, a Cardinal confronted with a courtesan . . . a Queen, the daughter of Maria Theresa, was reduced to see herself abandoned to

¹ *Memoirs*, Weber, vol. i, p. 21 of notes to chap. 1.

² *History of Europe*, Alison, vol. i, p. 177.

the chances of a debate full of scandals, her virtue questioned, her honour insulted."¹ The story is this: The court jeweller, named Boehmer, had made a splendid collection of diamonds, and then set them as a necklace, valued at £64,000. The King twice offered this necklace to the Queen, and she twice refused it, the second time with much of brusqueness. The jeweller had vainly tried to sell it in the various European courts; but the bauble was too costly, and it remained on his hands. The Grand Almoner was the Cardinal de Rohan, towards whom the Queen showed a marked coolness. In vain the Cardinal endeavoured to conciliate her, and he was becoming hopeless on the subject, when he became acquainted with a lady descended from the Royal house of Valois, and lately married to the Comte de la Motte. This lady was—or pretended to be—intimate with the Queen, and the Cardinal prayed her to plead with her Royal mistress for his admission into favour. The Cardinal was permitted to write to the Queen, and received answers from her; he became enamoured, and his suit was not rejected. At last, in August, 1784, he was bidden to be present in the garden of Versailles at a certain hour, and there a veiled lady gave him a rose. In December, Boehmer, the jeweller, hearing of Madame de la Motte's friendship with the Queen, sought her out, and asked her to press the necklace on her Majesty,

¹ *Histoire de la Révolution*, Louis Blanc, p. 220.

Madame de la Motte refused to have anything to do with the matter ; but in January, 1785, she went to the jeweller, and told him that the Cardinal de Rohan was instructed by the Queen to buy the necklace. The Cardinal duly appeared, was told that the design of the necklace was being sent to Spain, to the Princess of Asturias, and he answered that he was commissioned to buy it. The price was to be paid in instalments, falling due every six months. On February 1st the necklace was handed to the Cardinal, he showing the orders for payment, as agreed upon, endorsed by " Marie Antoinette of France ". The Queen hears that the necklace is going to Spain, and says sharply to the Spanish Ambassador : " You will not have the necklace, M. de Souza ; you will not have it, it is sold." On the 1st February the Cardinal is at Versailles, and gives the casket containing the necklace to a M. Lesclaux, on the written order of the Queen. Boehmer goes to the palace, and has an interview with the Queen ; writes her a letter, which she burns. A first payment is made through the Cardinal. On the 15th August the Cardinal is in the Royal Chapel, vested for service ; he is called into the King's Cabinet. " What is this about a necklace bought by you for the Queen ? " The Queen is present ; a glance at her ; the Cardinal hesitates ; he is arrested ; Madame de la Motte is also seized. The Cardinal is asked whether he will throw himself on the Royal mercy,

or be tried by the Parliament; he elects to be tried. Two alternatives are before the court; the Cardinal had bought and appropriated the necklace, or he had bought it by order of the Queen. On May 31st, 1786, the verdict is given: Louis de Rohan is acquitted—what then of the Queen? Madame de la Motte is made a victim, is flogged, branded, imprisoned; allowed, however, to escape in six months' time, and still later, her husband is paid £8,000 to bribe him to silence. A dark stain had fallen on the Royal ermine, never to be entirely removed. The Queen could not go through the public streets without being exposed to insult; the press teemed with pamphlets against "The Austrian". Europe knew not what to think. Was she guilty? who can tell? were the letters to the Cardinal all forged, and was he duped by Madame de la Motte? It may be so; a woman was found who swore that she personated the Queen in the garden of Versailles, and the Cardinal and the Queen may alike have been the victims of an intriguing woman. The truth can never be known; guilty or not guilty in reality, Marie Antoinette was adjudged guilty by the French, who already hated her, and dark clouds encircled the fair young head, which had shone so brightly when the Dauphiness entered France. She became the mark of popular hatred; all misfortunes in the State were attributed to her malign influence; the ever-growing national indebtedness was laid to her charge, and she passed

among the populace by the name of "Madame D ficit". Her luxury, her extravagance, gave sore offence: had she not bought St. Cloud, and urged the King to purchase Rambouillet, spite of the financial embarrassments? For Marie Antoinette, for the future, there was no hope in France.

While such was the history of the court, what of the history of the nation? Alas, it grew darker and darker, till National Bankruptcy loomed in the near future. Louis, on mounting the Throne, chose for his minister, M. de Maurepas, a man light, shifty, superficial, but who saved the King the trouble of thinking, and left him to his hunting and his smithy. On the question of recalling the exiled Parliament, we have seen that the ministers of the late King were dismissed, and Turgot was made Controller-General of Finances, with sore lack of finances to control. Turgot was "a philosopher," and his appointment was one of the stars of hope of the new reign; severe, just, deeply scientific, irreproachable in life, no better choice could have been made. The new minister set to work; he found that his receipts were  880,000 less than his expenditure; that the revenues of the next year were anticipated to the extent of  3,120,000, leaving him with a deficit of  4,000,000 to begin with.¹ His first act was to refuse the usual gift of  25,000 made by the farmers of the revenue to an incoming minister; his next to pay some public

¹ *History of Europe*, Alison, vol. i, p. 136.

creditors; his next to insist on strict economy everywhere. In nineteen months of his ministry he discharged debts to the amount of £4,000,000.¹ He removed the restrictions which checked the circulation of grain, and began to reform abuses in every direction.

In this work of reformation he was nobly aided by his brother ministers. Malesherbes, Minister of the Interior, helped with heart and hand. "He made it a first condition of accepting office that the King should sign no *lettres de cachet* but what he presented to him; and his first care was to visit in person the State prisons, and deliver half the inmates, many of whom had lingered for years in their dungeons. He intended to restore gradually the States-General; to concede to accused persons the right of being defended by counsel; to remove the restrictions on the Protestants in the exercise of their religious worship; to abolish torture and the punishment of the wheel; to re-enact the Edict of Nantes; to remove the censorship of the press; and . . . he proposed, as he himself said, "to plead the cause of the people before the King."² Turgot and Malesherbes together, would, if left to themselves, have practically recast French society; alas! not thus can the crimes of centuries be atoned for; it was too late thus to save France. Turgot desired also to reform army abuses, and for this work, he

¹ *History of Europe*, Alison, vol. i., p. 188.

² *Ibid.*, p. 189.

hit upon the Comte St. Germain, as War Minister. In the army was found an absurdly disproportionate number of officers, as compared with privates. To an army of 217,000 men there were no less than 80,000 officers, all nobles, who were only officers for the sake of the pay attached to their position. The household troops of the King were the first to feel the hand of reform, and were summarily suppressed; a measure scarcely wise so long as a Monarchy is maintained. St. Germain also introduced flogging into the army, and thus alienated the troops from the Government, and he reduced in all directions, making enemies on every side.

It has been well remarked that every one saw that reformation was necessary, but every one objected that the reform should touch himself. "Turgot is the touchstone for all; he summons them to say whether they wish truly to amend."¹ Every one desires his neighbour's improvement, but not his own. Turgot, a man with "the head of a Bacon, the heart of a L'Hôpital," according to his friend Malesherbes, feels for the suffering of the people. In looking at the masses, he recognises their individualism; in the graphic words of Carlyle, he feels that "Every unit of" them "has his own heart and sorrows, stands covered with his own skin, and if you prick him he will bleed".² He has studied the state of the country, and is sore at heart

¹ *History of the Revolution*, Michelet, vol. i, p. 560.

² *French Revolution*, Carlyle, vol. i, p. 80. Ed. 1871.

at the misery of which he knows. Money is needed for the needs of government. Whence shall it come? from the miserable or from the wealthy—from the rich or from the poor?

Knowing that the poor were already crushed by taxation, he sought to equalise its incidence. He proposed that the court, the clergy, the Parliaments, should be taxed; that the people should be relieved from the *corvée*, and that the expense of maintaining highways should be thrown upon the land; that the whole system of apprenticeship and corporations should be altered, so that trades might be entered freely by all; that all the internal custom-houses between district and district should be abolished.¹ Never had so sharp and sustained an attack been made upon vested interests, and one yell of dismay arose from all sides; Louis was weak, bowed to the storm, and dismissed the one man who, by Reform, strove to prevent Revolution (May, 1776). A certain M. de Clugny takes his place, and in six months' time is succeeded by Necker. A banker of Geneva, this man, heavy, reserved, a heretic, a Republican, and the more popular for being both. Nominally, to propitiate the Church, a nobody was Controller, and Necker was his subordinate, without a seat in the Council; but the nobody soon vanished, and Necker ruled alone. For five years he laboured at the hopeless task; he drew no salary, but liv on his own income; he abolished some 600 pla

¹ *Histoire de la Révolution*, Mignet, vol. i, p. 20. Ed. 1861.

and thereby made himself hated at court; he published in 1780 a *Compte Rendu*, partially showing the state of the finances, but skilfully hiding the worst dangers, and was sharply attacked by numerous financiers, who detected its errors; finally, Necker demanded a seat in the Cabinet, and was refused, unless he would become a Catholic; he placed his resignation in the hands of the King, and withdrew in May, 1781. One trait of his character deserves to be remembered. A courtier was pressing for a gift from the Royal treasury: "One thousand crowns," he asked; "what is that to the King?" "It is the taxation of a village," answered the minister.¹ The *Compte Rendu* of Necker marks a step onwards in the Revolution; for the first time a minister rendered an account of his stewardship to the people, and not to the King. Shortly after his resignation he issued a work on the *Administration of the Finances*, and in a few days 80,000 copies were sold.

Who now to turn to? Joly de Fleury is tried, and fails. D'Ormesson follows in 1788, and vanishes before the year is out. Turgot and Maurepas had both died in 1781. The deficit grows and grows. In November, 1788, appears M. de Calonne, smooth-tongued, subtle, courteous, a favourite at court, called by the ladies "the Enchanter," "the Model Minister". One sentence describes him: "Madame, if it is only difficult, it is done; if it is impossible,

¹ *Histoire de la Révolution*, Louis Blanc, p. 208.

it shall be done." "Necker had fallen through the courtiers; Calonne would support himself by them; his sophisms were strengthened by his largesses; he convinced the Queen with *fêtes*, the great nobles with pensions."¹ All was sunshine at court; Versailles breathed freely; money was wasted in every direction; new loans were made to pay the interest on the old. It is not the best way to pay old debts to contract new ones, though it keeps up appearances for a time. At last, no more borrowing can be done; the deficit yawns wider day by day; Calonne gazes at it, helpless; suggests at last: "Let us summon the Notables." It is December, 1786, and the King's edict is issued; Louis XVI calls to the wisest heads in his country, and summons them to his aid. The Notables were the leading men throughout the country, selected by the King; it is the acknowledgment that the King is not sufficient for himself; the first whisper of the country being called into council; the immemorial "thin end of the wedge," and in this case the wedge is applied to a dyke on the other side of which murmurs a torrent. "The Notables may prove the seed which is to produce the States-General," growls old Marshal Ségur;² ominous prediction, which is to prove true! However, the Notables have arrived, and have settled down to their deliberations, divided into Seven

¹ *Histoire de la Révolution*, Mignet, t.i., p. 25.

² *History of Europe*, Alison, vol.i, p. 163.

Bureaux, with a Prince of the Blood at the head of each, and composed of Prelates, Nobles, Magistrates. To them Calonne appears, and makes his statement, and what a statement! An annual deficit, varying slightly from year to year, but, during the last ten years, averaging £ 5,000,000. What is to be done with it? How fill up such an abyss? Sternly and promptly Calonne answers: "With the abuses." His gaiety is gone, and he speaks out boldly and frankly; a new land tax must be imposed on all, so as to lighten that on the poor; the privileged classes must be taxed with the rest. And this from Calonne! A shriek of anger rises; the popular minister is assailed with reproaches, accused of mismanagement; the Notables ask for accounts; the King tells them it is their business to deliberate on the form of taxation, not on its necessity; murmurs hint at States-General, and at last the word is spoken: the Marquis de Lafayette, in the Bureau of Monseigneur d'Artois, is the one to speak. "Your Royal Highness will permit me to say that there is no existing authority which can impose the land-tax . . . *The States-General alone have that right.*" "You demand States-General?" flashes fiery Artois. "Yes, Monseigneur." "Record it," says the Prince to the clerks darkly, and the key-note is struck. Calonne falls (April 8th, 1787), and is succeeded by Archbishop of Toulouse, Loménie de Brienne, favoured by the Queen; but the deficit does not disappear with Calonne.

Loménie must ask for new taxes: but first to dismiss the Notables, Calonne's unlucky device, who are deliberating, and voting propositions, raising uncomfortable questions, unneeded just now. They are gone, but they are gone to spread over France all that they have learnt, to sow widely the seeds of discontent and of inquiry. They became the very missionaries of the Revolution, carrying into every corner of the land the news of the danger, and pointing to the remedy, the States-General. A thousand fears flashed into men's hearts: the Government had manifestly failed; France was on the verge of bankruptcy. What worse danger might not lurk behind? Let the nation awake and save itself, the self-appointed saviours having proved so lamentable a delusion. The cry for the States-General rang through France. Marshal Ségur's words had proved true. The Revolution was begun. Loménie proposes his taxes—a stamp-tax and land-tax, to be registered by Parliament, as of old. But Parliament will not register until the state of the finances is laid before it; asks instead for expenditure, for proposed reductions. But Loménie wants registration, not discussion, and only discussion will Parliament provide. Abbé Sabatier makes a joke, which is as a match applied to gunpowder. "Gentlemen, you are asking for states of accounts. It is the States-General you want." Parliament declares (July 24th) that: "The Nation alone, united in

States-General, can give the necessary consent to a perpetual tax. The Parliament has not the power of supplying this consent . . . Charged by the Sovereign to announce his will to the people, *they have never been charged by the latter to act for them.*"¹ But money must be had, so Parliament is summoned to Versailles, and ordered to register by the King himself, and does so register. At Paris, next day, Parliament declares that the registry done by order of the King is null and void; the last resource of the Monarchy has been taken, and the authority of the Crown is defied (August 7th, 1787). Paris is awake, crowding the Parliament courts, and Parliament stands aggressive, threatens prosecutions, demands States-General, and that with no humble voice. It is unheard of, unbearable. On August 15th, the Parliament is exiled to Troyes, to bethink itself, and is forthwith adored by all France as the martyr of Liberty. On the 18th the Comtes de Provence and d'Artois find Paris murmuring and uneasy. Monseigneur of Artois is even threatened somewhat, and his guards draw their swords, but no blood is spilt—as yet. In a month a compromise takes place, and the Parliament returns. A fresh *vingtième* is granted, and a new loan is proposed, to terminate in 1792, in which year the States-General shall assemble to bless France. But Parliament does not register the loan; falls into that evil fashion of debating once more. Cannot the King

¹ *Memoire, etc.*, Weber, vol. i. p. 288.

hasten the deliberation by his presence? The King goes to Paris on the 19th November, to hold Royal Session. "Gentlemen, it belongs to me alone to judge of the utility of States-General; and I will not permit you to demand that which you should trust to my judgment." They are to register simply, say the Royal lips. For six weary hours the King sits patient. Sabatier, Fréteau, pray for States-General, with much humble respect, but, withal, no lack of determination. At last the King commands registration, without counting of votes. The Duc de Orléans—whilom Duc de Chartres of evil fame—smooth and deferential as becomes a Son of France to the Father of the country, asks: "Is it then a Bed of Justice, Sire?" "It is a Royal Session," answers back the King. "I implore you, Sire, to allow me to lay on the table a declaration that such registry would be illegal, and to be permitted to add to the registration, when made, that it is done only at express command of your Majesty." Majesty retires, much ruffled; and d'Orléans, triumphant, makes his protest, but finds himself sent from Paris on the morrow, and Sabatier and Fréteau are imprisoned. Parliament is called to Versailles, and the King erases its protest. Parliament retorts by complaints; petitions for the restoration of its three members; will do nothing until they return, except adjourn perpetually, and the other Parliaments of France join in. There is now no more talk of registration. The Parliaments of France, championing the imprisoned

deputies, attack *lettres de cachet* as a whole, and demand security of person for all Frenchmen. "Parliament wrote to Parliament to encourage one another in resistance . . . When a Commandant, or a Commissioner of the King, entered one of these courts to have an edict registered, the members all disappeared, leaving the Commandant alone with the Clerk and the Chief President. As soon as the law was registered, and the Commandant gone, back flew all the members to declare the registering null. The roads were covered with grand deputations of the Parliaments, going to Versailles to see their Registers defaced by their King's hand, and returning to the country to fill a new page with a new resolution more audacious than that which had been annulled."¹

This warfare must be stopped, and a coup d'état is planned. New courts shall be established to replace the Parliament, and a chief court of all, to register taxes for the whole kingdom. Moreover, the edicts constructing these shall be secretly printed, and promulgated throughout France on one day. A clumsy device enough, and clumsily performed. The King's press is soldier-guarded, and the printers are kept shut up, from day to day. Curiosity is naturally aroused, and suspicion is excited. M. d'Espréménil, a Member of Parliament who has won some reputation, goes to Versailles, ingratiates himself with a

¹ *Memoirs*, etc., Weber, vol. i, p. 817.

printer's wife, and the proofs of the edicts are passed to him, rolled in balls of clay. Back to Paris flies D'Espréménil, calls the Parliament, reveals the plot. Forthwith, in high excitement, an Oath is sworn—the first of many oaths—the swearers would never form part of any court save the Parliament. (May 3rd, 1788.) Loménie de Brienne tries his *lettres de cachet* once more against D'Espréménil and Monsabert, but both escape to the Palais de Justice, and the Parliament assembles rapidly, and declares "the session permanent". Paris is in an uproar, and the news reaches Versailles. From Versailles at midnight come troops, headed by Captain d'Agoust, of the *Gardes françaises*; the Captain demands the surrender of D'Espréménil and Monsabert, to him unknown by sight. "We are all D'Espréménils and Monsaberts!" rings through the hall. At eleven next morning D'Agoust withdraws, but returns with an officer of the court, and bids him point out the two magistrates. The officer protests that he cannot see them, but D'Espréménil and Monsabert come forward, and sacrifice themselves to save their comrades, and are forthwith carried to imprisonment through a crowd of sympathisers that, as yet, are only sullen, not fierce.

The excitement spreads throughout France; no Parliament would register the new edicts, would only protest, and send deputations to Versailles. From Brittany a deputation starts for the King, but

finds itself in the Bastille ; a second is turned back ; a third starts, larger and fiercer, reaches Paris, stays there, calls itself the Breton Club, it will call itself in the future the Jacobin Club, and will have work to do in the Revolution. Riots take place in all directions ; the whole country is in a ferment ; eight of the Parliaments are in exile ; justice becomes unattainable. Manifestly, this must be put an end to ; only £16,000 remained in the treasury ; the decisive step was taken ; the States-General were promised. On August 8th, 1788, the edict was signed which convoked the States-General for May 1st, 1789. On this announcement a perfect shower of pamphlets occurred, Loménie inviting all thinkers to express their opinions as to the best method of electing a body unknown since 1614. " Politics became the universal topic of conversation, and political pamphlets the fashionable study . . . Novels lay neglected, like sermons, on the shelves of the booksellers." ¹ Meanwhile Loménie de Brienne's reign was over ; on August 16th he had been forced to issue a notice that payments at the Royal treasury would be made two-fifths in paper, and three-fifths in cash ; in fact, it was practically a declaration of bankruptcy. Brienne had to fly ; his effigy was burned in Paris, his stole three-fifths satin and two-fifths paper, and bloodshed occurred in dispersing the mob. On August 24th M. Necker is recalled, and, amid frantic rejoicings, he takes

¹ *View of the Cause, etc.*, J. Moore, vol. i, p. 108.

the helm of State. Of all the pamphlets, that of a certain Abbé Sièyes stands forth pre-eminent, with three cogent questions, that France was about to answer: "What is the Third Estate? Everything. What has it been? Nothing. What does it desire to become? Something." The Duc d'Orléans proclaims: "The Third Estate is the Nation." The people were now to find a voice; they had discovered the mighty truth that "the nation dwells in the cottage"; in a nation of twenty-five millions 150,000 individuals may form a class, and yet, bound up with the nation, may be a part of it; but if the class sever itself, and place itself in opposition, it then becomes simply an enemy of the people, and must either stand aside or—be crushed.

The States-General were granted, but only intended as a delusion. The people grasped the shadow, and turned it into a reality. "The first who pronounced the name of the States-General—the Parliaments which demanded them—the ministers who promised them—Necker who convoked them—all believed the people incapable of taking any serious part therein . . . The result deceived all their calculations. This people, though wholly unprepared, showed a very sure instinct. When they were called to election, and informed of their rights, it was found that little remained to be taught them."¹ On two points the whole value of the

¹ *History of the Great French Revolution*, Michelet, vol. I pp. 74, 76.

concession depended. Should the Third Estate be equal in number to one, or to both, of the privileged classes? should the Three Estates vote by order, or by head? If the Third Estate were only equal in number to one of the privileged classes, it was clear that an union of the two classes could crush the third, and thus the privileged would still remain all-powerful; if the three Estates voted by orders, the Third Estate would in the same way be helpless. The whole nation shook with the contest, for on this decision hung the whole question of reality or delusion. The Parliament declared against the double representation; it had done its share of the Revolution work, and henceforth made way for other workers. Necker suggested that the Notables should be summoned to decide the question, and on November 6th they met again; Necker recommended the double representation, but the Notables were drawn entirely from the privileged classes, and had no idea of allowing the people to rule; they gave their decision against on December 12th. Necker, in spite of all, persisted in his recommendation; if the Notables would agree, well and good. If not, he would fight the people's battle alone, aye, and win it too. On December 27th the Royal proclamation appears that the Third Estate shall be equal in number to the two others put together. Twenty-four odd millions were actually to be allowed as many representatives as 150,000 individuals. On January 24th, 1789, the edict for the election of

Deputies speeds through France. All now is anxiety, eagerness, strife, breaking out here and there into tumult. The people elect representatives, which representatives, meeting in conclave, choose a deputy for the Third Estate, and the people too have found a voice in writing *cahiers de doléances*—petitions of grievances—setting forth their wrongs. These petitions were carried by the respective deputies, and were their instructions as to the demands of their constituents. A marvellous unanimity was there in these *cahiers*, speaking sadly of the burdens pressing upon all alike. "They described the feudal lords as the 'greatest scourge of the people' . . . and they demanded the immediate and utter abolition of their powers. Descending from general denunciations, they produced a long catalogue of particular grievances. Among these were the exactions of fixed and heavy rents . . . arbitrary valuations for the increase of them . . . the obligation of employing the mill, the oven, the wine and the cider-press of the lord and no other, *corvées*" of all kinds.¹ Thus the tongue of the people was loosed after long centuries of dumbness, and they spoke clearly their sufferings and their wrongs: the deputies of the Third Estate went to Versailles carrying with them the cry of the people for aid, of the people who, after ages of oppression, were still content only to ask

¹ *Lectures on the History of France*, Sir J. Stephen, vol. ii, p. 461. Ed. 1857.

for redress, who had not yet arisen to take it for themselves.

A singular scene took place in Paris over these sachiers. A certain Doctor Guillotin—to be notable hereafter, inventor of the guillotine—was collecting signatures to a petition of the people of Paris. Him the Parliament calls before it for rebuke, if not for chastisement. But crowds follow the bold doctor, and sign his petition outside the court, while he pleads within. Parliament, doubtful of the wisdom of prosecuting, compliments the Doctor, and he and his petition take themselves off triumphant, borne on the shoulders of the crowd, and Doctor Guillotin becomes a deputy of Paris.

The nobles elected their deputies without the double elections, and these were also charged with instructions. The clergy did the same; but among the deputies of the latter was a strong band of village priests, whose sympathies were with the people from which they sprang, and who were bitterly antagonistic to their bishops. Meanwhile a notable incident had occurred at Aix. The Comte de Mirabeau had offered himself for election to the nobles of Provence, as one of their own order. At the assembly of the nobles he spoke vehemently, urgently, as his manner was, and filled up the measure of his sins by a fiery article, which concludes: "Woe to the privileged orders! since to be therein is to be the man of the nobles, rather than that of the people; for privileges shall perish; but

the people is eternal!"¹ In answer, Mirabeau was expelled the Assembly; for a few days he was in Paris, and then he returned to Aix (Provence); the whole city turned out to do him homage; he paid a visit to Marseilles, and was received with Royal honours; the day after he left the town a tumult broke out; he flew back, stilled it, and rushed to Aix to quiet a similar outbreak. In April he was elected deputy both by Aix and by Marseilles, and decided to sit for Aix. The king of the States-General had now put on his diadem, the king who was throned in the hearts of the nation, and who had the might and the genius to rule. ✓

Gabriel Honoré de Riquetti, Comte de Mirabeau, had come by wild ways, over rocky paths, to this kingship of his. He was descended from the ancient Italian family of the Riquettis, who being banished from Florence, during the ceaseless changes of Guelph and Ghibelline, came to Provence, in France, and there settled down. A hot-tempered, strong-armed race, were these Riquettis, famous soldiers, reckless dare-devils. One of them, a certain Jean-Antoine, our Mirabeau's grandfather, was left for dead in the battle of Cassano, "receiving twenty-seven wounds in two hours' fighting," and getting his neck so nearly cut in two that he had to wear a silver collar ever after, and was nick-named Mirabeau, *Col d'Argent*. Son of his was Victor, Marquis of Mirabeau, surnamed the Friend of Man,

¹ *Mirabeau : a Life History*, vol. 1, p. 298. Ed. 1848.

an altogether objectionable man—spite of Carlyle's tenderness for him—with rigid, unbending theories, brutal and tyrannical; quarrelling with wife, son, with every one around him, so that at one time he had shut up every member of his family, save one, by means of the odious *lettres de cachet*, of which he used, during his life-time, no less than 60. Eighty volumes on "Political Economy" did this man write, and hated his son Gabriel forasmuch as he would not read them. Mirabeau was born at Bignon, March 9th, 1749—born, oddly enough, tongue-tied, he, the orator of France! Ugly he was, the young "lion-cub" from his very birth, and the uglier that at three years old he was attacked by small-pox, and his face became deeply scarred, "disfigured and deformed by huge seams and furrows". Keen the child was, too, as he grew up; at six years old he was confirmed by a Cardinal, and horrified his Roman princship; told that God never made a contradiction, such as a stick with one end, child Mirabeau retorts, quick as lightning: "Is not a miracle a stick with only one end?" He is brought up by Marquis Victor roughly and harshly, never spoken to save in terms of coarse abuse. At eighteen he joined the army; but winning his commanding officer's mistress, his life was made a burden to him, and he deserted his regiment; he was sent back, and the old Marquis, savage, imprisoned him by a *lettre de cachet* in the Ile de Rhé. From this prison he was shortly liberated, and

joined a regiment under orders for service in Corsica, where, as everywhere else, he won the affection of all hearts. From this he went to the family estate, and devoted himself to its improvement, winning the love of all the peasantry belonging to it. In 1772 Mirabeau married, and being only allowed an absurdly small income, ran promptly into debt. In 1773 the Marquis obtained another *lettre de cachet* against him, which was put in force the following year, and he was lodged in the Château d'If, where he remained nine months, and was then transferred to the Château de Joux, near Pontarlier. Allowed to visit the town, and becoming acquainted with the family of M. de Monnier, an old man of seventy-five with a girl wife, wedded to him by force, he soon fell in love with charming Madame Sophie, who returned his passion. Mirabeau appears to have struggled against the temptation, and wrote eloquent letters to his wife, praying her to come to him. Madame de Mirabeau, however, preferred the luxury of her father's house, and turned a deaf ear to his entreaties. At last, Mirabeau fled from Pontarlier, and was chased from place to place, while Sophie, whose love had been discovered, was subjected to sharp persecution. Mirabeau hovered round her, and at last swoops down, and carries away his dove (1776). After some weeks, they settled down at Amsterdam, and Mirabeau earned a scanty livelihood with his pen. In May, 1777, they were arrested, and Mirabeau, on

June 7th, was lodged in the Donjon de Vincennes. There he was kept for three years, and there he wrote his book on *Lettres de Cachet*, as well as numerous other works. In 1778 died his only son, the last of the house of Mirabeau. In 1780 he was released, and two years later made himself a mighty name, by pleading his own cause, at Pontarlier, as against a sentence passed on him for "abduction and seduction," and won a divorce for Sophie Monnier, who retired, however, into a convent. Then came a law-suit with his wife's family, at which all France gazed, the stormy eloquence winning and ruling wherever the tongue was heard, or written words could penetrate. Then come visits to Paris, to Belgium, and in 1784 to England. Back he came to Paris in 1785, and plunged into Finance, hurling forth thunderbolts against some joint-stock banks, and the Paris Water Company, till Paris became too hot for him, and he left for Germany. In 1786 he went to Berlin, and was specially invited to an audience by the old king Frederick, and thence rushed back to Paris during the Diamond Necklace excitement; in a few weeks he is again in Berlin, charged with a secret mission from the Government, which he speedily throws up in disgust. In December, 1786, he returns to France, to look at the Convocation of the Notables, flings out another pamphlet on Stock-Jobbing, which he sorely hates, attacks Necker and has to fly from Paris once more; in a month he is back, not again

to leave France, save for a brief visit to Brunswick, in June, 1787 to gain some information for his book on the Prussian Monarchy. He now flings himself eagerly into the political life, and has much to say anent the States-General, identifying himself ever with the cause of freedom, the cause of the people, until the name of Mirabeau is synonymous with a cry for Liberty.¹

Robespierre, too, was elected to this mighty¹ Assembly, for for him also was there work to do. Robespierre, strangest of characters, most unlovable, yet not wholly bad. A man of blameless life and manners; narrow-minded, narrow-hearted, yet single-eyed, and aiming at the good of all, and not at his own profit; cruel and bloodthirsty, only because weak, and therefore timid; wicked? not as moral guilt is usually meted out; but is it not a crime to grasp at power when the hand is too weak to rule? Rousseau was Robespierre's master in politics; what Rousseau dreamed, Robespierre endeavoured to create; but the unhappiness of Robespierre was that he saw the right, and aimed at it, but was not strong enough to labour for it, and carry it triumphantly at last. He could only strike for it frantically, and he wounded Liberty almost to the death while aiming at her foes.

The trumpet-note rang out for the conflict between an awakened nation and the class who had

¹ The above sketch is taken from *Mirabeau, a Life History*, published anonymously.

ruled it for themselves and not for the people. Five millions of men had taken part in choosing the warriors for that contest; and behind the chosen deputies stood the whole nation, a nation no longer asleep, no longer dumb. One sharp, short skirmish took place on April 27th, pointing to the danger, as yet not understood, the danger which should stain the Revolution. An outbreak of the lowest stratum of the world of misery, of that class whose increasing agony had been unregarded, and who were now to *force* it into notice. The army of the beggars appeared in the daylight, from the dens and the cellars in which they had lurked. They were developed into brigands, armed with heavy clubs, and were to be seen mostly about the Faubourg St. Antoine, circulating among the workmen. A certain M. Réveillon, a paper-manufacturer, had said—or was reported to have said—that 15 sous (7½d.) a day was enough wages for a workman; a crowd gathers round the manufactory, hoots, curses, yells, at last threatens. Besenval, Cominadant of Paris, towards evening sends a small troop of *Gardes francaises*, who clear the streets, but without bloodshed. On the next morning the crowds re-gather—reinforced it is said by outsiders, who entered Paris during the night—attack the manufactory, burst open the doors, pillage the building, at last set fire to it. The soldiers are called out, artillery comes up, the mob fling stones and tiles at the soldiers, the soldiers retort with bullets, and, after a sharp

struggle, the rioters are driven off, with a loss in killed and wounded of ninety-two soldiers, and some five hundred rioters. It is the first attempt at absolute struggle, but is no struggle of the people ; there were fifty thousand workmen in the Faubourg St. Antoine, a resistless force, had they really risen ; the surgeon at the Hôtel-Dieu, who received many of the wounded, noticed the difference between these rioters and the wounded of the Bastille conquest : "these only looked like criminals," the surgeon says.¹ This was a flash from the powder mine that underlay Paris, and that exploded once or twice during the Revolution. Immediately after this riot, the last deputy was elected, one of the deputies of Paris, he who had written on the Third Estate, who, though an ecclesiastic, was one of its chosen, the Abbé Sièyes.

The States-General were now complete ; what was the work they would do ? The people had now a voice ; what were the words they would say ? Full and strong flows the river of the nation, between the banks, which have so long confined it, of the Church and of the Throne ; higher and higher it rises, and the waves break heavily and suddenly ; have the dykes been removed in time which erst restrained it, so that the stream may now roll swiftly on, strongly and yet peacefully, bearing safely on its bosom the new State Ship of France ? Alas ! the dykes have been too high and too strong,

¹ *History of the Revolution*, Mischelet, vol. i, p. 81, note.

and the stream has been accumulating too long behind them ; they are thrown down all too late, and too suddenly, and I see, surging forward, the torrent which in a few moments shall swell over the banks which can no longer confine it, and, tossing on the foam-crests of its waves, the plaything of its storm-driven billows, I behold a wreck, as it were of broken mitres, mingled with the fragments of that which was once the Crown of France.

LECTURE III

FROM MAY 4TH TO JULY 17TH, 1789

ON Saturday, May 3rd, 1789, Versailles was *en fête*, for the members of the States-General, so long hoped for, so long battled for, were to appear in the King's palace to be introduced to the "Saviour of France". This ceremony, which should have bound together the people and the Throne, was turned into a dissolvent by a mass of petty insults offered by the court to the deputies of the people. All these were devised, says Michelet, to mortify those "who, at the elections, had been acting the part of Kings, and to remind them of their low origin. Weakness was playing at the dangerous game of humiliating the strong for the last time".¹ "In admitting the nobility and the clergy both foldings of the door were thrown open, and they were received by the King in his cabinet; but in admitting the deputies of the Third Estate the opening of one half of the door was thought sufficient, and they were received by his Majesty in a kind of ante-chamber."² A

¹ *History of the French Revolution*, Michelet, vol. i, pp. 87, 88.

² *View of the Causes, etc.*, J. Moore, vol. i, p. 147.

contemporary journal, the *Point de Jour*, gives the following account: "Each province was divided into three. The clergy were presented to the King at eleven, the nobles at one, the commons at four. These last, assembled in the Salon d'Hercule, were all in confusion; the masters of the ceremonies, who should have marshalled them, had forgotten their lists; they kept the deputies waiting while they searched for them . . . At last, after three hours' delay, after dragging them through all the apartments, and along a great part of the gallery, they were received in the King's room, which they were simply hurried through." Such a matter is of little importance yet it roused a spirit marked clearly enough in the following resolution, passed at the meeting immediately afterwards, and reported in the same journal. "When the nation demands that all humiliating distinctions shall be abolished; that the signs of respect paid to the Monarch (which cannot be too great, since a people in honouring its Prince honours itself) shall be uniform and universal, for difference in these is not a tribute of respect, but is a symbol of slavery; it is then that will be cited this recent example of servile rites. To-day we are only individuals, whose mouths are not yet opened by the provisional legislator. Ah! when we can speak, shall we not concern ourselves with something more serious than the nomenclature of stairs, doors, and saloons, through which the master of the ceremonies

made us pass." Thus ominously began the great drama, at the *dénoûment* of which the parts of the players were to be so signally reversed.

On the following day took place the procession from the Church of Notre Dame (de Versailles) to that of St. Louis. All is sunshine on that bright May morning; the streets are gay with flowers, and banners, and tapestry; on either side lines of soldiers keep the way for the coming pageant, and behind them press eager faces of the populace, with the light of a dawning hope raying from ten thousand eyes; the balconies are filled with France's fairest daughters; the very roofs are crowded with spectators; all Paris seems to have betaken itself to Versailles. Hark! in the distance sounds the roar of the cheering multitude, hailing the first who emerge from the doors of Notre Dame; on they come, through the heaving crowd, 'mid waving hats and shouts of triumph, the deputies of the Third Estate, the commons of France, clad in sober-coloured suits, short black tippet cloaks across their shoulders, slouched hats unadorned with plumes, sombre in their dress as were the lives of the people who sent them there; some courtiers laugh at the dress imposed upon them, and the applause redoubles, rending the air with cries of "Long live the Third Estate". They are past, and now a brilliant troop, "clad in black coats, with vests and cloaks of cloth of gold, with laced cravats and broad cavalier hats, plumed with white ostrich feathers,"

glittering with gems. Surely, the applause will now redouble? A dead silence falls on the crowd, the moment the Duc d'Orléans is passed, who, slightly in advance of his own order, seems to mingle with the commons; not a sound is heard, no hat is raised, no voice gives welcome; to them succeed the clergy, and still the same stern silence; the Host passes, the lines of its canopy held by four Princes of the blood, and then walk the King and Queen, attended by their court. For the King the shouts break out again, to bless the Monarch who has given the States-General to France; but the Queen does not share in the welcome; nay, a few cries of "Vive le Duc d'Orléans," her bitterest foe, are heard, and for a moment Marie Antoinette turns pale and staggers, to recover the next instant, and to walk calmly and frigidly forward, with haughty, unbending mien. The procession disappears into the Church of St. Louis, to listen to M. de la Fare, Bishop of Nancy, who opens his sermon with the words, "Receive, O God, the homage of the clergy, the respects of the nobles, and the humble supplications of the Third Estate." Murmurs fill the Church with dull menace, and little attention is paid to the orator, until he draws a vivid picture of the violence of the tax-gatherers, and of the misery of the people. "And it is in the name of a good King, of a just and merciful Monarch, that these miserable tyrants act with such barbarity." Then thunders of applause ring round the Church, in despite of

etiquette.¹ The spectacle is over, and all are gone to their homes, to assist the morrow, and to talk over the magnificence of the day. "But what made the splendour of the spectacle was not the crowded, sunny streets, nor the glitter of bayonets, nor fair woman-heads, nor the grave voice of the priests, nor the chime of bells mingling with the trumpet-blast, with the roll of drums, with the ringing orders of commanding officers ; no ! the real, the imposing novelty was the language held through the crowd, the words exchanged in passing ; it was the change in the faces of the people, the fiery glance, the pride of bearing, the new spirit ; it was the virility and the restless strength of a people touched by liberty."²

The 5th of May dawns brightly, and the States-General are to be formally opened by the King. The *Salle des Menus* has been chosen for the ceremony, a splendid hall, whose decorations have been specially superintended by the King himself. The large windows are covered with blue gauze, and draped with white silk ; at one end is the Royal dais, covered with purple velvet, lily-embroidered ; and on this stands the throne under a gorgeous canopy, edged with deep gold fringe, and an arm-chair for the Queen, with stools for the Princesses. Round the dais are ranged the seats for ministers and other high dignitaries ; on the right are the benches

¹ *Histoire de la Révolution*, Louis Blanc, p. 261.

² *Ibid.*

of the clergy, on the left those of the nobles, and in front of the throne, to face the King, are the seats of the Third Estate. Round the hall run spacious galleries, from which gaily-dressed folk inspect the glittering scene below, galleries hereafter to be filled by Paris crowds, and by women in revolt. The court enters, the clergy, the nobles, passing through the grand entrance, and for two hours the commons have been waiting at a small side door. The applause that greeted the Duc d'Orléans, and Necker, the popular minister; the murmurs, drowned in vociferous cheers, as Mirabeau walked across to his seat among the commons, with head thrown back, and haughty eagle-glance flashing at the murmurers—have all died away. The King enters with his Queen and court, and, warmly greeted, takes his seat on the throne, smiling, happy-looking; but as the cheers cease, and he notices over against him the grave, stern faces of the commons, his own face changes, and he looks troubled. Mirabeau is heard to say: "There is the victim."¹ Glance for a moment, friends, at those commons of France, before whom a King and Queen grow pale. Mirabeau is there, towering in height over his fellows, with black mane of hair, face seamed and scarred, deep-set flashing eyes, proud, disdainful lip, and haughty, lion-like bearing. Robespierre is there, pale, small, livid, with his intent face and veiled enthusiasm. Dr. Guillotin is there, meditating

¹ *Histoire de la Révolution*, Louis Blanc, p. 262.

his new machine for cutting off heads, surely on a seat not far from Robespierre. Abbé Sièyes is there, to answer his question as to the Third Estate, and to become notable in the Assembly; Bailly, too, the astronomer, called from his studies to guide the Assembly presently, and to become Mayor of Paris in troublous times.¹ And many another sturdy, true-hearted man, seeing work that needs doing, and steadfastly purposing to do it, and all these 585 men so closely bound together in one common bond of loyalty to the nation, that of all these only one shall turn traitor on the memorable day—soon to come—when the Tennis Court oath shall be taken. On the benches of the nobles sit some men, who deserve a word of note; the young Marquis de Lafayette, of course, is glittering there, full of hope; and D'Antraignes, who had written a book, bearing on its title-page the old motto of the Arragon Cortes on investing a Monarch: "We, who are worth as much as you, promise to obey you if you maintain our rights; if not, not"; and Lally Tollendal, hoping to see the British constitution transplanted to French soil; and Alexandre and Charles Lameth, brought up at court, but now on the popular side; and Clement Tonnerre, one with all these in feeling and in action. These, with some others, formed the Liberal party among the nobles. Turning our eyes

¹ Louis Blanc says that Abbé Sièyes and Bailly did not join the Assembly until May 28th, and the point seems doubtful.

to the clergy, we see Abbé Maury, thorough Royalist, powerful in debate, cool in the hour of danger, brave as a lion who, when threatened with the *lanterne*, answered: "Friends, will you see any better there?"¹ There, too, is Talleyrand, keen-eyed and bitter-tongued, to win an European name by and by. And mark that the clergy are practically divided into two bodies, the gorgeous nobility of prelates, and the quiet Third Estate of *curés*, a division that shall bear much fruit in the coming struggle.

The King overcomes his emotion, and makes his speech, clumsy, blundering, in his own Royal fashion; when he ceases speaking he covers his head, and the nobility, according to ancient custom, follow his example; in a moment the plain, slouched hats of the commons face the jewelled, white-plumed hats of the nobles, claiming equality of right. A murmur runs round the hall, "Hats on," "Hats off," "to which his Majesty puts end by taking off his own Royal hat again. The session terminates without further accident or omen than this; with which, significantly enough, France has opened her States-General".² And so night falls upon Versailles, on joyful and hopeful as on angry and sullen hearts; on some radiant, some sombre; on a people full of gladness, not yet sceptic of its King's goodwill, not yet convinced of the uselessness of

¹ *French Revolution*, Carlyle, vol. i, p. 129.

² *Ibid.*, p. 131.

looking to the court, to the nobles, to the Church, for the righting of wrongs, still patient, still trustful, still waiting; on a Queen, who, in her palace, breaks down utterly, after the long day's strain, and is for hours in terrible convulsions, scarce able to breathe; "they are always before her, those dark faces seen in the midst of a festival; that cry of 'Orléans for ever' is still ringing in her ears."¹ And so the night falls on all alike, on moaning Queen and on triumphant people; but the night of tyranny is over in France, and the first pale gleams of the dawning of Liberty are painting the eastern skies; see how the soft light glimmers through the storm-clouds, and gilds even their dark edges with the promise of a sun that is rising; as he comes, the clouds turn redly crimson, and dashes, as of blood, fleck all the morning sky; but they shall pass away, melted in the warmth of his beams as he rises higher, and France shall rejoice in the radiance which—though sometimes cloud-veiled—shall never set again.

The following interesting table of the composition of the States-General is given by Alison:²

CLERGY

Archbishops and Bishops	...	...	48
Abbots and Canons	...	...	35
Curates	...	...	210

293

¹ *Histoire de la Révolution*, Louis Blanc, p. 265.

² *History of Europe*, Alison, vol. i, p. 228.

NOBLES

Prince of the Blood	...	...	...	1
Magistrates	...	...	...	28
Gentlemen	...	...	...	241
				<hr/> 270 <hr/>

THIRD ESTATE

Ecclesiastics	...	..	...	...	2
Gentlemen	...	...	...	...	12
Mayors	...	...	...	...	18
Magistrates	...	...	...	...	62
Lawyers	...	...	...	...	279
Physicians	...	...	...	...	16
Merchants, Farmers, etc.	...	...	...	...	176
					<hr/> 565 <hr/>

When the Parties were divided in the National Assembly, they were in the following proportions to each other :

Right Side	...	...	...	...	322
Centre	...	...	...	...	480
Left Side	...	...	...	...	326

Strange is it to note that among all these men there were no Republicans, none who desired the fall of the Throne; even Robespierre appears to have been Monarchical. The States-General were to destroy Royalty, and yet they were composed of Royalists; they were to shiver the Crown into pieces, and yet they all cried : " Long live the King." They were literally driven into the Republic, from the hopelessness of Monarchy, from the impossibility of Bourbon rule. But it was the impotency of

Kingship, not the might of Republicanism, that founded the Republic in France.

On the 6th of May the Deputies of the Third Estate assemble in the Great Hall to await the other orders, so that the powers of the delegates may be verified, and the regeneration of France may begin. The two other orders do not appear, and, on inquiry, it appears that they have repaired to their several chambers, to verify their powers independently, and that it only remains for the Third Estate to do the same. This the Third Estate will by no means do. It will be remembered that while the first question of double representation was settled in favour of the Third Estate, the second question, of voting by order or by head, was left undecided. But if the three orders were to vote as orders, all the power would remain in the hands of the privileged classes, for the third, in spite of its double number, would have only one vote, and would be invariably outvoted by the other two. To verify the powers separately was the first step towards voting separately, so the Third Estate signified that they awaited the other two orders in the Common Hall, which was assigned to them for their place of meeting, solely on account of their greater number, but which seemed to give them the air of being the only deputies who duly attended at the place of meeting. And now ensued what is surely one of the strangest scenes in history. For eight weeks five hundred and sixty-five men.

deputies of the nation of France, remain day after day in "masterly inactivity". Painfully and sadly they come daily, to sit there, doing nothing, incapable of doing anything, not being a constituted body, being simply a number of individuals, presumably delegates, since they are there, but with no authority to act. The strength of their position is, that they do nothing. For doing nothing they cannot be punished, and meanwhile they lie, as a heavy log, in the path of all business. The nobles had verified their powers by May 11th, and on the 13th they sent a notification thereof to the commons, met by Mirabeau with bitter sarcasm. "Since the nobles had the right to verify their powers separately, what hindered them from going on, from making a constitution, from settling financial difficulties, from promulgating laws? Was it worth while to count twenty-four millions of men? Were not the nobles France?"¹ On the 14th Rabaut de St. Etienne proposes a conference between representatives of the three orders, but only embittered strife was the result. On the 26th the nobles brusquely break off the negotiations. Meanwhile the people are taking a part in the dispute, and crowd the galleries every day, to see the unverified commons sitting "waiting". Presently the sight begins to irritate; are not these good citizens longing to regenerate France, and the privileged orders prevent all regeneration? had not

¹ *Histoire de la Révolution*, Louis Blanc, p. 266.

the ministers. on May 7th, in order to keep secret their misdeeds, suppressed the *Etats Généraux*, journal edited by patriot-deputy Mirabeau, and of which only the first number had appeared? True, Mirabeau continued to publish, simply changing the name of his paper to *Lettres à ses Commettants*, and the court had not again interfered; but was it not because they dared not? For a certain Electoral Committee of Paris had had a word to say about this, and had passed a resolution that the act of the Council suppressing the journal "is an attack upon public liberty, at a moment in which it is most precious to the nation, and is injurious to the liberty of the press, claimed throughout France". And thus encouraged, Mirabeau went on his way.¹ On May 27th the clergy laid a snare for the commons, to throw on them the delay of getting to work, and to excite against them the feelings of the people. "A prelate came into the assembly to weep over the poor people, and the misery of the rural districts. Before the 4,000 people present at that meeting he drew from his pocket a hideous lump of black bread. 'Such!' said he, 'is the bread of the peasant.' The clergy proposed to act, to form a commission to confer together, on the question of food and the misery of the poor."² The snare was broken by the dexterity of Robespierre. "Go and tell your colleagues that if they are so

¹ *Annals of the Revolution*, Moleville, vol. i, pp. 47, 48.

² *History of the Revolution*, Michelet, vol. i, p. 94.

impatient to assuage the sufferings of the poor, let them come to this hall to unite themselves with their friends. Tell them no longer to retard our operations by affected delays. Tell them it is vain to employ stratagems like these to induce us to change our firm resolution. We must recall the clergy to the principles of the primitive Church. The ancient canons authorised, for the relief of the poor, to sell even the sacred vessels; but happily it is not necessary to recur to so sad a sacrifice. It is only necessary that the bishops should renounce that luxury, which is an offence to the modesty of Christianity, dismiss their carriages, their horses, and the insolent lackeys who attend them; to sell, in fact, if need be, a quarter of the ecclesiastical property."¹ One can imagine the cheers of the spectators at this home-thrust, and the baffled prelate, with the tables so skilfully turned on him, retired discomfited: Robespierre had made his first step upwards.

"In the name of the God of peace," the clergy were now entreated to join the Third Estate, and to aid the people; and a large minority, nearly half the order, became restive, and talked of union; it was the section of the *Curés*. On the earnest request of the King, conferences were resumed, to be broken off again on June 8th by the nobles. On the 10th the time for action is come; the commons are grown strong enough to go forward alone.

¹ *Life of Robespierre*, G. H. Lewes, p. 76. Ed. 1849.

Mirabeau rises, and says that "a deputy of Paris has an important motion to submit"; and Abbé Sièyes steps forward, and moves that the other two orders be once more invited to join the third, and that, if they refuse, the third shall constitute itself in their absence, and proceed to business. On the 12th the message was sent; on the 13th a deputation was sent from the nobles to say that they were deliberating; the commons waited till seven in the evening, and then began calling over the whole roll-call of the States-General. None of the nobles answered to their names. Of the clergy, three came forward—Lecesve, Ballard, and Jallet—and were received with transports of delight; seven more joined on the following day. The verification of the powers now proceeded rapidly, and Bailly was chosen President; and it was at last declared, on a motion of Abbé Sièyes, "That the Assembly was now composed of the representatives returned directly by ninety-six-hundreths of the nation; that such a body of deputies could not remain inactive on account of the absence of some classes of citizens; that it belonged to them only to interpret and to represent the general will of the nation."¹ Only remained then the name that they should take, and long was the debate on this point. Various titles were proposed and rejected, till a happy inspiration comes to a M. le Grand (June 17th). We represent the Nation; then surely our true

¹ *Memoire*, Weber, vol. ii, p. 25.

title is the NATIONAL ASSEMBLY. Now the decisive step is taken ; now the first blow is struck in what we may call the peaceful Revolution, the Revolution of law, of intellect. There is no more talk now of orders or of classes ; we, the representatives of the people, are the delegates of the nation ; we speak in the name of France. Now, King, nobles, clergy, look to your privileges ; for against you stands up the French people, incarnated in a National Assembly.

During this curious inertia an edict of the King had appeared, dated May 29th, which is worth rescuing from the obscurity of the newspaper columns of the *Mercur de France*, for the light it throws upon the question : " Where did the money go to which was raised every year ? " I cannot translate the names of the officers, since many of them fill offices that have, so far as I know, no English equivalents :

			France
Le grand fauconnier de France	...	...	300,000
Le capitaine du second vol, pour corneille	...	...	50,000
Le capitaine des deux vols, pour milan	...	...	90,000
Le capitaine du vol, pour héron	...	...	110,000
Le capitaine des quatre vols, pour champ, rivière, pie et lièvre	...	...	120,000
Le grand louvetier de France	...	...	200,000
Le premier écuyer	...	...	400,000
10 écuyers servant par quartier, à 48,000	...	...	480,000
42 grand valets de pied, à 8,000	...	...	336,000
16 valets de chambre, à 30,000	...	...	480,000
To be carried			2,566,000

		Francs
	Carried forward ...	2,566,000
6 huissiers de la chambre, à 60,000	...	360,000
1 porte-manteau ordinaire	... ..	60,000
6 porte-manteaux, à 36,000	... ..	216,000
4 tapissiers, à 16,000	... ..	64,000
1 barbier ordinaire	... ..	60,000
4 barbiers, à 30,000	... ..	120,000
2 porte-chaises d'affaires, à 15,000	...	30,000
8 valets de garde-robe, à 25,000	... ..	200,000
1 cravatier	... ..	60,000
5 porte-ménables de la chambre, à 6,000	... ..	30,000
		<hr/>
		3,766,000

France was on the verge of bankruptcy, peasants were starving in all directions, and yet it took some £148,000 to make amends to these useless officers for dismissing them.

Confronted with this new monster, a National Assembly, the court party started back aghast, and at Marly, to which they had carried off the King to envelop him wholly with court influences, they devised a plot against it. On the 18th the Assembly began its work, by declaring "that no tax was legal that was not confirmed or enacted by the representatives of the nation. That nevertheless, to prevent confusion, the existing taxes should be continued to be levied until they were annulled by the Assembly, or until the Assembly separated".¹ On the 19th June a disputed vote took place among the clergy, and 149 decided to join the Assembly, whether the remainder would or not, on the

¹ *A View of the Causes, etc.*, Moore, vol. i, p. 179.

following day ; but on that day—the ever-memorable Saturday, June 20th—the heralds were heard proclaiming that a Royal Session would be held on Monday, the 22nd, and members, arriving at the hall, found it surrounded by soldiers, and in the hands of workmen, preparing for the King. “I protest against such orders,” says President Bailly, “and I will give an account of this to the National Assembly.”¹ A stiff-necked man is this President Bailly, and not to be easily cowed. The morning is wet and foggy ; the deputies wander in groups, doubtfully, uncertainly. But who are these bedraggled wanderers ? “Their name ?— The National Assembly. Their object ?—To make a free people.”² From these groups rise various cries : “To Marly,” where the King is, and where he can hold Royal Session on the terrace, without more ado. “To the gallery of the palace.” “To Paris.” But Dr. Guillotin suggests “To the Tennis Court,” a large building close by, and there they betake themselves. Not an inviting hall—cold, bare, dull, empty, save a bench or so, and rough wooden table. Round the deputies gather the crowd, hot, indignant, for them. To them comes a note from M. de Brézé, master of the ceremonies, that the sittings are suspended by order of the King. Rather by the necessity of the case, M. de Brézé, since, glancing round, we see nothing whereupon a National

¹ *A View of the Causes*, etc., Moore, vol. i, p. 220.

² *Histoire de la Révolution*, Louis Blanc, p. 271.

Assembly can sit ; but a National Assembly can stand, aye, and will so stand, and swear a mighty oath that shall ring through the world. Deputy Mounier shall write the oath, and President Bailly shall read it. " The National Assembly, considering that they have been convoked to fix the constitution of the kingdom, to regenerate the public order, and fix the true principles of the Monarchy ; that nothing can prevent them from continuing their deliberations, and completing the important work committed to their charge ; and that, wherever their members are assembled, there is the National Assembly of France—decree, that all the members now assembled shall instantly take an oath never to separate—and, if dispersed, to re-assemble wherever they can—until the constitution of the kingdom and the regeneration of the public order are established on a solid basis ; and that this oath, taken by all and each singly, shall be confirmed by the signature of every member, in token of their immovable resolution." ¹ Thus reads President Bailly, and with upraised right hands the answer thunders back from the lips of the National Assembly : " We swear." One man only does not swear, and will not sign, a M. d'Auch, who writes his name last as " opposing". What now, Queen of France ? what now, Monseigneur d'Artois ? You have tried to make these men ridiculous, and you have made them sublime ; you have tried to make

¹ *History of Europe*, Alison, vol. i, p. 248.

them a laughing stock, and you have transformed them into heroes.

Before separating, the Assembly agreed to meet on Monday before the Royal Session, but on Monday a new trick. Royal Session deferred till Tuesday, and Tennis Court engaged to play in by the Comte d'Artois, leaving a National Assembly once more shelterless. They try the Convent of the Recollets, but are refused admittance; then the Church of St. Louis. As they enter, see, the chancel is full, and the doors fly open, and they are met by a procession of clergy, headed by five prelates, and the Archbishop of Vienne announces that they have come to join in a common verification. Two nobles come in and do the same, and all is joy, and the Assembly disperses, triumphant. On the morrow, June 23rd, is held the Royal Session. The streets are full of soldiers; bayonets gleam everywhere; the nobility and the clergy enter the Hall, and Royalty is rolling up in State; and not till immediately before the King's entrance is the Assembly admitted by a side door, having been kept long waiting in the driving rain. The members enter, wet through, sullen, resentful, and seat themselves in silence. In silence, too, when the King appears, and, for the first time, no "Vive le Roi" greets him. He makes his speech, petulant and arbitrary; annuls the acts of the Assembly, which he calls the Third Estate, of the 17th June, and all that have followed since that date, and bids the *Garde*

des Sceaux read the Royal programme, which maintains the voting by order; abolishes some few of the worst feudal burdens; protects rents, tithes, feudal rights (bursts of applause from the nobles, and cries of "Silence there," from Assembly); promises equality of taxation, *if the privileged orders will consent*; maintains the army exactly as it is—thus making every private soldier an enemy of the Crown, because, for the private there was no hope of rising.¹ The King then spoke harshly and drily: "Gentlemen, if you refuse to aid me in so noble an enterprise, alone I will effect the happiness of my people, alone I will consider myself as their representative. I command you, gentlemen, to separate immediately, and each to repair to-morrow to the chamber appropriated to his order, which are being duly prepared." The King, followed by the nobility and clergy, passed out through silent rows of insulted representatives, and the Assembly was once more alone. A few moments' hesitation; but Mirabeau rises, and flings himself into the breach, with sharp criticism and quick reminder of "the religious force of your oath".² While he is speaking enters M. de Brézé, scandalised, and says something unintelligible. "Louder, louder," sounds from all sides. "Gentlemen, you have heard the King's order." "I think," says dignified Bailly, "that an

¹ *Histoire de la Révolution*, Louis Blanc, p. 274. Michelet, vol. i, p. 114.

² *Annals of the Revolution*, Moleville, vol. i, p. 98.

assembled nation cannot receive orders." And stormier yet sounds Mirabeau's thundering voice: "Yes, Sir, we have heard the intentions that have been suggested to the King; and you, who cannot be his mouthpiece to the States-General; you, who have here no place, no voice, no right of speech; you are not the person to remind us of his words. Still, to avoid all misunderstanding, all delay, I declare to you that if you are bidden to drive us hence, you must go ask for orders to use violence, for the force of bayonets alone shall make us rise from our seats."¹ Poor De Brézé is thunderstruck, and goes out meekly, backwards, bowing low. The body-guards are forming outside the Hall, and Mirabeau has yet one word to say, which shall blunt the bayonet-points. He proposes a decree that "the person of each deputy is inviolable," and that if any one of them be arrested for his freedom of speech, those who lay hands on his sacred person "shall be deemed infamous and traitors to their country," and shall be brought up before the Assembly for judgment.² As he speaks, the carpenters come in sent by the court, to prevent discussion by the noise of their tools; but they lay down hammer and chisel to listen to the roll of Mirabeau's eloquence, and the court is foiled once more. The resolution is passed by 448 votes to 34,

¹ This answer is taken from *Lettres à ses Commettants*, by Mirabeau, reported in the *Hist. des Journaux*, Gallois, vol. i, p. 825.

² *Annals of the Revolution*, Moleville, vol. i, pp. 97, 98.

and the sitting is rightly wound up by Sièyes : "Gentlemen, you are to-day what you were yesterday." Yes, in spite of court plots, in spite of Royal orders, in spite of bayonets, in spite of threatenings, this National Assembly of France is the National Assembly, and will continue so to be. The King himself seems to feel the hopelessness of the struggle, and answers wearily, when told they continue to sit : "Very well, let them be." The day closes somewhat ominously, for, at a rumour of Necker's dismissal, caused by his non-appearance at the Royal Session, some 8,000 men gather, and crowd through palace gardens, over palace terraces, even into the palace itself, and they cannot be quieted until Necker himself appears, and promises to continue in office.

On June 24th, the clergy, who had joined the Assembly in the Church of St. Louis, come to take their seats in the Common Hall. On the 25th, 47 nobles, including the Duc d'Orléans, follow their example ; and on the 27th the King writes to the remaining nobles and clergy to do the same, as a personal favour to himself. They obey, grudgingly, and the struggle is over, the people are triumphant, the nation has swallowed up all classes, and the National Assembly must now be acknowledged by court, as well as by people, as the representative of France. That night joyful crowds surrounded the palace, and cries of *Vive la Reine* gave the thanks of the people to the Queen, who had, as they believed,

yielded to the popular prayer; which, however, she had by no means done, but was busily plotting to slay the young Liberty with foreign steel.

Events now crowd so rapidly, that it is difficult to give any clear and intelligible account of them within the compass of such lectures as these. It must suffice to say of the Assembly, for the present, that it is plunged in work, is nobly loyal to the people, though surrounded by the bayonets of the court, protests vainly against the foreign soldiery pouring in from all sides, and through all the terrible commotion goes steadily on, laying deep the foundations of French freedom, abolishing feudalism root and branch, and enunciating those "principles of '89" which are so often referred to in French politics to-day. I propose to sketch the work of the Assembly in the next lecture, showing how the Revolution of Intellect, of the philosophers, worked itself out. Meanwhile, leaving Versailles, we must betake ourselves to Paris, where the Revolution of Force is beginning its work.

The final triumph of the National Assembly was welcomed in Paris with passionate rejoicings, and the authorities, fearing riot, bade four companies of the *Gardes françaises* load their muskets, and the companies refused to obey, and were confined in barracks, their commanders being doubtful of their loyalty; soon afterwards they burst from their quarters, and went to the Palais Royal, the focus of revolutionary feeling, crying: "We are the soldiers

of the Nation": "We will obey no orders contrary to those of the Assembly." The ringleaders were arrested, and on June 30th news reached the Palais Royal that these soldiers were imprisoned in the Abbaye, and were, on the following day, to be transferred to the terrible prison of Bicêtre. A cry arose: "À l'Abbaye, à l'Abbaye!" Were they not imprisoned for refusing to load against the people, and should the people desert them in their need? Some soldiers desire to join in the rescue, but they are bidden remain behind; at the prison, the alarmed gaoler gives up the keys, and as he is doing so some dragoons gallop up, sword in hand; the people cry that they are only come to set free the soldiers' comrades, and they gently turn back the horses, and the dragoons sheath their swords, and raise their helmets, and the imprisoned guards are carried off and lodged in the Palais Royal; one real criminal is found among them, and is sternly sent back again to prison; and next day a deputation goes to the Assembly to ask it to intercede for the soldiers, and the King pardons them on the sole condition that they shall return to prison until legally set free. But soldiers are pouring into Versailles from every side, and menace Paris—foreign soldiers, hateful to French pride; 35,000 troops have already arrived, and Baron de Breteuil and Marshal de Broglie are in command; De Breteuil, who says that "if it is necessary to burn Paris, it shall be burnt," and De Broglie, who growls that a discharge of cannon

would soon "re-establish absolute power, which is dying, in the place of the Republican spirit, which is growing".

The Queen and the Comte d'Artois are triumphant; Louis is passive; Paris is almost at boiling-point. Noticeable now is it that Marat's voice is heard, and heard in favour of peace, for Marat sees clearly that the court is only anxious for an excuse to pour troops into Paris, and to crush the people once for all. Marat was a doctor, a man of science, and of some fame as a writer; he had travelled through England and Scotland, and had translated Newton's *Optics*; he had written some twenty volumes of metaphysical, anatomical, and philosophical researches, and twenty of discoveries in various branches of physical science; he was now editor of a periodical, entitled, *l'Ami du Peuple*. In the number of this issued on July 1st, we find him warning the people of their danger, and exhorting them to patience. He points out that the ministry are endeavouring to excite tumult; "very well, keep clear of sedition, and you will checkmate their perfidious manoeuvres . . . Be, I repeat, peaceable, quiet, submissive to right order, and you may laugh at their horrible rage . . . Think what would be the terrible effect of a seditious movement, if you gave way to it, if you fell into the trap. The scourge of civil war descends on you, and this would at once sign the death-warrant of the Assembly . . . Be persuaded of this, that if you do

not disturb the precious harmony which reigns in the National Assembly, this most desirable, this most important, Revolution will be perfected without costing one drop of blood to the nation, one tear to humanity."¹ Thus did Marat counsel Paris in those early days of the Revolution.

Suddenly, on July 12th, a cry is heard at the Palais Royal, disbelieved at first: "Necker is sent away." The evening before he had received his dismissal, and had gone away secretly, lest his open departure should cause a tumult. It is enough; a few moments of stupor, then young Camille Desmoulins springs on a chair, pistol in hand, and on his lips a summons: "To arms!" For a badge he plucks a twig from a tree, and fixes it in his hat, green, the colour of hope; in a few moments surges through the streets a multitude, all wearing the signal of revolt. The busts of Necker, and of the Duc d'Orléans, are paraded, draped in crape; but no harm is done till, on reaching the Place Vendôme, some soldiers there fire on the crowd, and the bearer of Necker's bust falls dead. Besenval is stationed in the Place Louis XV with soldiers and cannon, and on him this smaller body now retreats; still, all might have gone off peacefully, but Besenval, impatient, brutally orders his soldiers to charge right through the Tuileries gardens, where harmless strollers lounge on that Sunday afternoon. Thus roughly attacked, they fling

¹ *Histoire des Journaux*, Gallois, vol. i, pp. 489, 490.

stones, broken bottles, at the soldiers, and presently the soldiers retreat; little blood has been shed, one or two killed at most; but it has needlessly irritated the people—it has put a match to the mine of insurrection. “Arms, arms,” are now the one need of Paris; armourers’ shops are broken into, but nothing is touched save the weapons. Some foreigners guard the barracks of the *Gardes françaises*, who, hot with indignation, fire at them, and press them back; slowly Besenval withdraws, doubtful of the loyalty of his troops, and Paris is left in the hands of her citizens alone. And now is Paris truly great. It will be remembered that the electors of Paris, instead of dispersing after the election, had continued their organisation, and, by this time, they were in thorough working order, with a branch committee in each of the sixty electoral districts, the hall of each district serving as a centre of authority. On the 13th the committee met at the Hôtel de Ville, promptly elected M. de Flesselles, Provost of Paris, as their chairman, named a central permanent committee—who resigned shortly after in favour of a committee of two members elected from each of the sixty districts, a committee that was increased on July 28th to the number of 300, and became the Municipality of Paris—dispersed the electors to their several districts, with powers to form a militia in each, and thus rapidly raised a formidable army, the National Guards, distinguishable by their cockade of

red and blue, the colours of the city. Meanwhile marvellous scenes were enacting in the city; the citizens had taken on themselves the whole duty of preserving order; they had opened the prison of La Force, where only debtors were confined who were guiltless of crime; but when the criminals in the Châtelet, hearing of this deliverance, strove to break out, they were quickly on the side of the jailers, and restored order. There was no pillage save of arms. These people were starving; the bread was so terribly adulterated that it burned the throat, and caused intestinal disorders; the flour was yellow and bitter-scented, and so clogged together that it had to be chopped in pieces with a hatchet; and to get even this bread men and women had to wait long hours, in line, to take their turn at the bakers' shops. Things were growing worse and worse; Paris was becoming famished. Yet this people, this starving people, committed no robbery, even for food; a man stole a hen, and he was instantly hanged for theft. They heard that there was store of flour at the Lazarist Convent; they went to it, broke it open, refused the money offered them, and brought out the flour—to seize it? these famishing men. No! for Liberty had breathed on their hearts, and the word "equality" was on their lips, and, when all were alike hungry, should they fill themselves alone? They faithfully took the fifty-two waggons full of flour, hoarded by the monks, to the common

market-place, that all might share alike.¹ But still arms were wanting, and they applied vainly to the permanent committee; then an order was given to make pikes, and in thirty-six hours 50,000 were ready. Flesselles played with the impatience of the people, sending them hither and thither in search of arms; at last, powder was discovered in the cellars of the Hôtel de Ville, and a priest, named Lefebvre, served it out to the people all night long. And so night fell on Paris, the eve of the fall of the Bastille.

Early next morning, July 14th, a report flies that there are 80,000 muskets in the cellars of the *Invalides*, and a crowd pours towards it to search; M. de Sombreuil, the governor, appears at the closed gate to parley, but for parley there is no time; the muskets that belong to the King must evidently belong to the nation; if the gate is closed, they can climb in over walls, and in they go, mad for arms, but hurting no one, save a few of themselves in the crush on the cellar stairs; then up and out again, and whither now, O citizens that have become soldiers, whither? "To the Bastille."

And what was this Bastille, against which Paris had arisen? The Bastille? it was the incarnation of the agony of the people, of the tyranny of the Crown. The Bastille? it was the ever-present symbol of oppression, the grave in which was buried alive every victim of despotism. The Bastille? it

¹ *Histoire de la Révolution*, Louis Blanc, p. 290.

was the dungeon in which was stifled every voice that cried for Freedom, in which was stilled every heart that throbbed for Liberty. The Bastille? it was that prison from which Latude had written in 1760: "I have been suffering for 100,000 hours"; Latude, who had to suffer 200,000 hours more before he was set free; Latude, who, in his dungeon, lay through the fierce cold of winter, with iron on every limb, and straw on cold stone for his couch, till the cold made him half blind, till the cold froze off his upper lip, and the teeth, exposed to it, decayed away in their turn; Latude, who was only one out of thousands of victims. The Bastille? it was that castle in which were underground cellars, 19 feet below the level of the court, whose only furniture was a large stone, straw-covered, whose windows, loopholes, letting in only twilight and foul air, opened into the ditch into which ran the great sewer of the populous district, whose occupants, in addition to the miserable captive, were toads, lizards, monstrous rats, and huge spiders. This was the Bastille which the gallant workmen of Paris rose to destroy. It was a mighty fortress, this Bastille of France; the castle itself consisted of eight huge towers, whose walls were 6 feet thick, joined together by a wall 9 feet in depth. A massive wooden gate, of crossed beams, faced with iron, admitted to the central court, within this tower-circle. Round these towers ran a ditch, crossed by a drawbridge; outside this ditch came the outer court, with the

commandant's house, soldiers' barracks, and other offices, encircled in its turn with a ditch, to pass over which could be let down either the large draw-bridge, or else a small one, sufficient for foot passengers. Such was the fortress which a crowd of workmen hoped to take by force. A sublime madness, surely, the very insanity of enthusiasm. For the Bastille was not defenceless; De Launay, the governor, had prepared for an attack; fresh loopholes had been cut, and loaded cannon frowned through them; paving stones and other missiles were ready to hurl at anyone who should venture too near the walls; there were muskets and ammunition in plenty; of food and water only was there scant store, since no real siege was to be looked for; the garrison consisted of 114 men, of whom 32 were Swiss, and 82 old soldiers past active service. Some slight overtures have passed from the Hôtel de Ville to De Launay, and Thuriot, the messenger, has even penetrated to the inner court, and has bidden the garrison admit a citizen guard, to share with them the custody of the State prison. But there is now no more time for treaty; from the top of one of the towers De Launay and Thuriot have seen the city rolling towards them, the people have taken the matter into their own hands, and but one cry rings through Paris: "To the Bastille! to the Bastille!" The crowd now heaves around it, and there comes a shout, ever repeated: "We will have the Bastille!" Fortunately, parallel to the barracks

runs a line of shops, towards the governor's house (which De Launay would not pull down, because he drew rent from them), and these guard the assailants. From the roof of a perfumer's shop two citizens—Davanne and Dassian—two soldiers—Bon-nemer and Tournay—slip unperceived on to a wall which approaches the barracks on the other side the ditch; with a leap they reach it, they are in the courtyard, and their keen hatchets ring on the chains of the smaller drawbridge, while the bullets hail round them. It is down, and some rush across; hatchets enough now to strike at the heavier chains, and the large bridge falls thundering, crushes one man and wounds another as it strikes the ground, and the people, with a shout, flood the outer court. Frowns the Bastille itself now upon them, grim and lowering; but one path to it; through that passage which faces the gate, the gate whence musket barrels gleam sullenly; but on, citizens, for the sake of the prisoners: on, for the sake of France in chains; on, though the crash of muskets welcome you, and ye fall in the first wild charge. Back they stagger, the citizens, but yet stay to carry off their wounded into safety; and see, in the nick of time, here comes a detachment of grenadiers, and with them gallant Hullin, half-pay officer, who has sworn to bring them home victorious, or himself to be brought home dead; two cannons also, that shall answer back the musketry, and clear the way to the gate. But our citizens, in their hurry, have made a

mistake ; they have tried to set the drawbridge on fire by heaping burning piles opposite it, and these are in the way of the attack, and must be removed at all hazards, even though cannon, loaded with grape-shot, threaten those who venture ; forward spring two citizens, and fall dead ; two more—officer Elie and merchant Réole—who fall not, but succeed in dragging away the burning mass. Now the cannon come and are directed at the drawbridge, a lucky shot may strike the chains and bring it down, but, hark to the whistle of grape shot crashing through the crowd ; one falls, and dying, cries : " I die, friends, but fight on, you will win " ; and louder and louder rings the ceaseless shout : " We will have the Bastille." Again the crash comes, but there is no giving way ; " our corpses shall fill up your ditch," they cry as they fall ; and now, alas ! a young girl, thought to be De Launay's daughter, is caught, and threatened by some ruffians with burning if her father will not surrender ; but gallant Bonnemer snatches her from their grasp, bears her to safety, and returns to the assault. Five hours the struggle has lasted, 83 are dead, 88 are wounded, and within the Bastille only one has fallen ; but the defenders begin to quail before their indomitable assailants, who die, but who cry " courage " as they fall, and each dead is replaced by twenty living. " We must surrender," say some, answered passionately by De Launay—whose brutality has made him hated, and who fights with the courage of

despair—that he will blow up the Bastille rather. Indeed, he springs to fire the powder-magazine, and to die with the Bastille and half Paris in ruins for his tomb, but is held back, aye, faced with bayonet points. He will surrender then, but how to reach the enemy, since letting down the drawbridge may not, without some terms agreed upon, be thought of? A paper is slipped out, by a port-hole out in the bridge itself for firing through, and a plank across is balanced by citizens on the other side, and one man essays the slender bridge, but falls midway, and is dashed to pieces. Another—Maillard by name—risks the danger, and crosses safely, amid breathless silence, suddenly fallen on the tumult; they will surrender, their lives being spared. The soldiers promise safety, the drawbridge falls, the people rush in like a torrent, the Bastille is taken.

The people rush in, truly, but not to slay; in the first moment of triumph, fresh from the fall of their brethren and from a five hours' struggle, they strike not the vanquished; one only, who flies, is struck down outside. They come, not to bring death, but to bring liberty, and they fly to set the prisoners free. Of these there are only seven remaining, two of whom are gone mad with misery; the sight of these, of the awful dungeons, of the instruments of torture, drive the crowd half frantic with passionate indignation. De Launay, above all—who had deprived some of these poor wretches of their one pleasure, a tiny bit of garden, that he might let it

for a small profit—should he escape, while these had agonised in his cruel grasp so long? As they press round him, on the road to the Hôtel de Ville, guarded by Hullin and Arné, menaces are heard, and some blows are aimed at him; haughty, fierce, he turns on his assailants, and in vain Hullin strives to guard him. Amid the clash of blows, Hullin falls exhausted, and when he recovers De Launay's head on a pike tells the fate of the prisoner. Alas! for the barbarous trophy of vengeance; but thus had the nobles exposed the severed heads of their enemies, and the people had learnt the lesson. At least, we English have no right to speak over-harshly of the savage custom, since, but few years before this, Temple Bar bore these same ghastly trophies until they rotted away. I do not seek to excuse the barbarity; I do not pretend to condone the crime; but I do ask for the people the same justice that you give to the noble; I demand for the democrat the same measure that you mete to the aristocrat, and I claim that if you brand with disgrace for this cruelty the brutal populace, that you shall also brand with the same stigma the brutal nobility who taught them the shameful practice. Five other men were massacred, one of whom fell a victim to the ignorance of the crowd, good De Losme, who had ever striven to lighten the prisoners' lot, but who, wearing the uniform of an official, was taken for one of the tormentors. Flesselles also lost his life, but not by any tumult of

the crowd. Accused of treason, he was being led to the Palais Royal, and passed through the people without even an insult being directed against him ; but as he reached the corner of the quai Pelletier, an unknown hand fired at him, and the bullet went through his brain. Some thought the shot came from a ruffian in the crowd ; some that it was fired by an emissary of the court, lest Flesselles should reveal some compromising secrets which were in his possession. There was no more bloodshed. The French guards, who had steadily protected the defenders of the Bastille, asked for their pardon. "Swear fidelity to the nation," answers Elie, and they swear, and pass in safety. In Paris to-night there is no sleep : all keep their lamps burning, to aid in preserving order. Pikes are being made in every smithy ; bullets are being cast ; trenches are being dug ; barricades thrown up ; all heavy things that may serve as missiles are piled in readiness on the roofs of houses. The city is a huge camp, and in one part the watchword is " Liberty," in the other " Washington ". Paris is in revolt ; the Revolution of Force is begun.

Meanwhile, in Versailles, spite of the news from Paris, spite of the troubled Assembly, the courtiers are dancing and singing, and rejoicing over their coming triumph, and pouring out wine for the foreign soldiers, meanwhile keeping the worst tidings back from Louis himself. But at midnight the Duc de Liancourt rouses Louis from his

slumbers to tell him of the state of his capital. "It is a riot," says Louis, languidly; "No, Sire, it is a revolution."

In the morning the King goes to the Assembly, accompanied only by his two brothers, and announces that the troops shall be sent away. Transported with joy, the members leave their places to escort him back to the palace; but as he goes the doubt of the people springs to the lips of a woman, who pushes aside the Comte d'Artois: "Oh, my King! are you really sincere? will they not make you change back again?" A deputation of 88 from the Assembly—including Lafayette, Bailly, Lally Tollendal—go to Paris to acquaint the people with the King's promise to send away the troops, and in the Hôtel de Ville, enthusiastically welcomed, Lafayette and Lally Tollendal speak of the King's good heart. A chief was needed for the National Guards, and a gesture of Moreau—hereafter to win a name—towards the bust of Lafayette, causes him to be elected by acclamation; to the colours of the cockade he adds white, since the red and blue alone were the colours of the Duc d'Orléans, as well as of Paris, and thus the Tricolour becomes the badge of patriotism. Bailly is now elected Mayor of Paris, and the day ends with a *Te Deum* at Notre Dame. The same evening a

¹ See throughout, for the framework of these scenes, *Histoire de la Révolution*, Louis Blanc, pp. 292—304, which has been principally followed in the account of the Bastille and its fall.

courier is sent to recall Necker, and on the following day Bailly begs the King to visit Paris; the King is curious and will go; as to the governor of the Bastille, "he," says the King, "has richly deserved his fate."¹

The King may go to Paris, if he will; the Princes of the Blood, for their part, will fly as far from it as may be, Comte d'Artois first of all, with six other Princes. "Seven Princes of the Blood Royal of France could not more completely humiliate the citizens of Paris than by seeking their safety in flying from their sanguinary fury," says courtier Weber.² On which grimly remarks Carlyle: "The Burghers of Paris bear it with unexpected stoicism! The Man d'Artois indeed is gone; but has he carried, for example, the Land d'Artois with him."³ With them flies many a noble, and three generals, De Broglie among them, like rats from a falling house, deserting their Sovereigns in the hour of their sore need. Presently, all over the country, they fly, and with better cause, for the long-agonising peasantry have arisen at last, and are burning the castles, and chasing away their inmates.

The day after this flight of the Princes, July 17th, the King goes to Paris, after duly hearing mass, and with a small retinue passes through the guards,

¹ *Histoire de la Révolution*, Louis Blanc, p. 807.

² *Memoirs*, Weber, vol. ii, p. 124.

³ *French Revolution*, Carlyle, vol. i, p. 177.

drawn up 150,000 strong, who line the way to the Hôtel de Ville; the tricolour cockade marks each, the new tricolour flags droop heavily, the cry *Vive la Nation* replaces *Vive le Roi*; as he mounts the steps of the Hôtel de Ville the guards cross their sabres above his head, and he passes under "a vault of steel," to the Great Hall; there he confirms the appointments of Lafayette and Bailly, approves the orders for the formation of militia, and for the demolition of the Bastille, finally puts the tricolour in his hat, and returns to Versailles, having thus legalised the Revolution.

And now, surely, all is well; the Assembly is at work, Paris is self-governing, the Princes are fled, Necker has returned in triumph, the King is the friend of his people. Alas! one other Revolution threatens, the most terrible of all—it is the Revolution of Hunger.

LECTURE IV

CONSTITUTION BUILDING

DURING these long weeks hunger weighs heavier and heavier upon Paris. The weary sufferers wait their turn in the long baker's line, and famishing mothers leave famishing children to stand long hours waiting for the unwholesome bread ; and some fall out of the line, and die as they wait, and others see their children die on their knees, literally starved to death. Then some remember stories of the King's goodness, of his tender heart, and from one to another the word passes : " If the King were here, we should have bread " ;¹ and at last, in the women's hearts, grows up a longing that the King should come to Paris, to save his perishing people. The longing grows more passionate as a report spreads of foreign soldiers re-appearing, of court plots with emigrant nobles—nay, of a plan to carry the King off to Metz, whence issuing, with an army, he shall subdue rebellious Paris. And then, to fan the smouldering wishes into flames, comes the news of a banquet, given on October 1st to the regiment

¹ *Histoire de la Révolution*, Louis Blanc, p. 381.

of Flanders, which arrived at Versailles on September 23rd, and doubled the Royal guards. At this banquet the toast of "The Nation" was rejected, the tricolour was trampled on, the white cockade of Bourbon was worn, the King and Queen were present for a while, passing round the room, and all was excitement—excitement *against* the nation. Answers back excitement *for* the nation from Paris, and bitter murmurings at court-banquetings while here, in Paris, the people are starving. Sharpest comes the cry from the women, the mothers of famishing children, till on Monday, October 5th, the cry swells into a shout from female throats: "To Versailles." The thought so long half-formless starts out full grown, as Minerva from the head of Jove. A young girl seizes a drum, and the roll summons women from every quarter; all must come; well-born or poorly-born, clad in rags or in muslins, maid or matron, it matters nought. To the Hôtel de Ville, first of all, where already is a crowd of men, hasty, indignant—nay, one or two rush at Abbé Lefebvre, and will hang him, but a woman cuts the rope, and saves him.¹ See, Maillard, of the Bastille, is here, and catches up the drum, repeating the cry, "To Versailles," and starts; and after him they roll, the women of Paris, "to bring back the baker," Louis, "the good Papa," who will give them bread. Meanwhile Louis hears of their coming, and says gently: "They come for bread; alas! if it had

¹ *Histoire de la Révolution*, Louis Blanc, p. 399.

depended upon me, I would not have waited till they came to ask for it." The news reaches the Assembly, and Mirabeau whispers to Mounier, who is in the chair: "Paris is marching on us." "I know nothing," answers Mounier. "I tell you it is true; find yourself suddenly unwell, and go to the castle." "Paris is marching on us, is it?" says Mounier, drily; "all the better; we shall be a Republic the sooner."¹ But it is three o'clock, and they are here; to the Assembly first, where only a deputation may be admitted, Maillard and fifteen women, and there Maillard pleads that Paris is starving, that bread is dear, and that, while men wait in line at the bakers, they lose the wages that should buy the next day's bread. Mounier will do what he can, will go to the palace, and six women with him, through the crowds bedraggled in mud and rain; through prancing guards, trying to disperse the women; but gets at the palace good words, and nothing more. Meanwhile fair Théroigne de Méricourt, the "Pallas Athene" of the insurrection, has won the regiment of Flanders with her bright eyes and eloquent woman's tongue; only the bodyguards of the King show any hostility, and between them and the citizens some slight *fracas* occur. Hints are thrown out to the crowd, by court emissaries, that if the King were absolute again, bread would be plentiful; but "they answer bitterly that they want bread, but not at the price of

¹ *Histoire de la Révolution*,

Blanc, p. 392.

Liberty".¹ Into the Assembly at last they press, out of the drizzling rain, still with the cry of "Bread, bread," from every mouth, making discussion impossible. Mounier, returning, finds his seat occupied by a woman, and the sitting at an end; so he sends for bread to all the bakers in Versailles, for sausages, and for wine to warm the starving, wet-drenched, women; and in the Hall of the Assembly they are fed and comforted, these mothers, wives, and sisters, who had risen in revolt, because suffering had made some change necessary, whose trumpet-call had been the cry of their starving children, and who now laid siege to the palace, with Famine as the commander of their array.

Little sleep was there for anyone on this night of the 5th October; as the women were breaking their long fast in the Hall of the Assembly came the tramp of an armed host in the streets; it was the National Guards, headed by Lafayette. For in Paris excitement had run high. The Guards had echoed the women's cry that the King should come to Paris, and had surrounded their General, praying him to lead them to Versailles. At last, about five in the afternoon, the Municipality decided that he had better go; and he started at once, with some 15,000 Guards, and a multitude of armed citizens from the Faubourgs, and reached Versailles at midnight. Arrived there, he repaired at once to the

¹ *Histoire de la Révolution*, Louis Blanc, p. 398.

château to encourage the King, settled the sentries round the palace, and then wearied out, at five in the morning, flung himself down to snatch a few hours' rest. But there is no time for sleep, Lafayette, up and be doing, for at the palace there is riot; the crowd has gathered again, and has passed into the courtyard, through a side door not fastened, and the body-guards, as yet unmenaced, fire, and two in the crowd are killed, and fiercely the people rush forward to strike down the assailants, and two body-guards are slain, and the rest fly hurriedly, up staircase and along corridor, followed by the crowd, now angry, furious. Towards the Royal apartments they fly, and for a moment two guards keep the Queen's door, and are sorely wounded; but the assailants break not in, and in a few moments more Lafayette is there with his Guards, and all danger is over. Much has been made of this attack, but all seem to have forgotten to notice that if the crowd had been the bloodthirsty fiends that they have been pictured, King, Queen, and Royal children would all have been massacred, and that without difficulty. The first attack was made by the body-guards, and was naturally repelled by counter-attack of the people, but the loss of life on both sides together appears to have been four, two citizens first, then two body-guards. Michelet puts the loss of life at twelve, but he seems to have no authority for doing so, and stands alone in the statement, so far as I know. These two body-guards were beheaded in

the court by a man named Nicholas Jourdan, and we find that this man is *shunned at once by those around him*. The crowd remain in the court, crying for the King and Queen, who appear in the balcony, and are heartily cheered; even the Queen, whose quiet courage pleases, wins applause. At one o'clock they start for Paris, a strange, half-melancholy, half-triumphant, procession. The weather has cleared, and is bright and sunshiny.¹ One peculiarity there is in this procession, mark-worthy, as stamping its character; the Guards in front carry loaves of bread on their bayonet-points; fifty cart-loads of corn come next, and round the Royal carriage there is only one cry: "Now we shall not lack bread, for we bring to Paris the baker, the baker's wife, and the baker's boy." Such was the Revolution of Hunger, that broke out so rapidly, and had such mighty consequences, the revolt of starving women, who only rose to get bread for the children. Nay, for the Queen even was there pardon, if only she could be true. "O, our good Queen," cried the women, "be no longer a traitor, and we will all love you." Alas! Marie Antoinette must still plot, and deceive, and incite to invasion, until the death of all *hopes* of her loyalty followed the long-dead *faith* in her, and the fair imperial head fell under the knife of the guillotine, because while the Queen lived there was no safety for

¹ Madame de Staël, as quoted by Louis Blanc, p. 450 of his *History*.

France. And thus Versailles was left behind, with all its brilliant memories, with its masked balls, and gorgeous feasts, and dainty supper parties, and shady orangeries, and they who had been the centre of its magnificence, the sun of its star-system, had left it for evermore, and had gone to the city of Paris—Paris, that was to be at once their prison and their tomb.

And now we will leave the King to meditate and the Queen to plot, while the child-Dauphin digs his little garden in the Tuileries—leave them, in peace and unmolested, guarded only by "the hearts of their people," which they pretended to trust, but at which they were ever seeking to strike a fatal blow. We must now turn to the National Assembly, and study its mighty work, that Assembly which will be revered the more as time goes on, and its efforts are more justly appreciated; the Assembly which, through the turbulent time that is past, and the quieter time that is coming, has laboured, and shall labour, faithfully and steadily towards one end, the making of a constitution for France.

We have already mentioned the names of the leading spirits in the Assembly, and have given a rough sketch of the previous history of mighty Mirabeau; there is one other man who demands some further notice at our hands than the mere mention of his name—that young man who had spoken in answer to the prelate and his black bread,

Maximilien Robespierre, the man who has carved his name so deeply in history, in letters that are red with blood.

Isidore de François-Maximilien Robespierre was the son of a notary, and was born at Arras in 1758. He was left an orphan at ten, and went as scholar of his school to Paris in 1770. In the College of Louis le Grand, of which he became a student, were studying also Camille Desmoulins and Danton, to be known hereafter. Robespierre was an ardent scholar, breathing in the life of the ancient Republics of Greece and of Rome. Quitting college, he studied as an advocate; still in Paris, poor, and caring not for pleasure, "terribly in earnest" always. "He was near enough to the court and the *salons* to know what passed there; far enough removed from them to feel some hatred at the distinction. He could see that the Great were only the Privileged, and had no real title to be an aristocracy. Any common observer might have seen that; but the serious, unfriended Robespierre saw it with terrible distinctness."¹ His study done, and admitted as advocate, Robespierre returned to his native town of Arras, and there became notable as lawyer, while gaining some little fame, as poet, for a knack of versifying. He was placed on the bench of the Criminal Court, but shortly resigned, having to condemn an assassin to death. This trait is full

¹ *Life of Robespierre*, G. H. Lewes, p. 18. Ed. 1849. From this work the details here given as to Robespierre are drawn.

of significance when taken in conjunction with his subsequent actions. He was not naturally cruel, but "he was a fanatic who pushed onwards to his goal, though his passage might be through a sea of blood".¹ The States-General called Robespierre from the semi-obscurity of a provincial town into the seething life of the capital. To the flood of pamphlets that poured over France Robespierre contributed his little drop, and attracted some attention. Some peasantry came to him to plead for them against the Bishop of Arras, hitherto the patron of Robespierre, and powerful as a sovereign in the town; Robespierre examined their case, found it just, and pleaded it. He was made President of the Academy, and soon after took up another case of oppression, a victim of the infamous *lettres de cachet*, and attacked the whole system. This was his last case: he was shortly after chosen as deputy for the Third Estate of Artois, and went, as the "support of the unfortunate," as the "avenger of innocence,"² to take his share in the mighty battle that was now so near. "Robespierre had not the advantage of birth, of genius, nor of exterior, to arrest men's notice. There was nothing striking about him, his small talents had only shone at the bar, or in provincial academies . . . he was more than unknown, he was mediocre and despised . . . Robespierre's figure was small, his limbs feeble

¹ *Life of Robespierre*, G. H. Lewes, p. 53.

² *Ibid.*, p. 61.

and angular, his step irresolute, his attitudes affected, his gestures ungraceful; his somewhat shrill voice sought oratorical inflexions, but was only fatiguing and monotonous; his forehead was good, but small, and projecting over the temples, as if enlarged by the mass, and embarrassed by the movement of his thoughts; his eyes, much veiled by their lids, and very sharp at the extremities, were deeply buried in the cavities of their orbits; they were of a soft blue colour; his nose, straight and small, was very wide at the nostrils, which were high and too expanded; his mouth was large, his lips thin, and disagreeably contracted at each corner; his chin small and pointed, his complexion yellow and livid, like that of an invalid, or a man worn out by vigils and meditations. The habitual expression of his face was the superficial serenity of a grave mind, and a smile varying betwixt sarcasm and sweetness. There was *softness*, but of a sinister character. The dominant characteristic of his countenance was the prodigious and continual tension of brow, eyes, mouth, and all the facial muscles. One saw that the whole of his features, like the whole of his mind, converged incessantly on a single point, with such power that there was no dissipation of will, and he appeared to foresee all he desired to accomplish, as though he had already the reality before his eyes."¹ Mirabeau

¹ Lamartine, as quoted in *Life of Robespierre*, G.H. Lewes, p. 69.

alone discerned the true nature of this man, and the strength there was in him. "That man," he said, "will go far, *for he believes all that he says.*" Intensity of conviction is the knife that opens this world's oyster.

On the history of the other notable men in this notable Assembly, we have no space to dwell. I can only suggest to you to study them out for yourselves in the many volumes devoted to this period of the world's history. We have seen the Third Estate battling bravely, and winning its spurs in its first struggle. It had now, surrounded by foreign bayonets, and tempted by court influences, to remain loyal to the people, and fight for the nation with brain though not with arm. Much fear was experienced during these early days, lest the Assembly should be dissolved by force; and at last, on the 8th of July, Mirabeau protests vehemently, warning the court of the terrible danger caused by the presence of the ever-growing army round Paris and Versailles, and he is appointed to draw up an address to the King: "Sire, we adjure you in the name of the country, in the name of your own happiness and of your own glory: send back your soldiers to the posts from whence your counsellors have summoned them . . . Your Majesty does not need them; ah, why should a Monarch, adored by twenty-five millions of Frenchmen, assemble round the Throne, at such cost, some few thousand foreigners? Sire, in the midst of your children, let

your safeguard be their love."¹ This address, from which the above is a brief extract, was presented to the King by twenty-four members of the Assembly, among whom were both Mirabeau and Robespierre. The King replied that he must retain the troops around Paris, but that the Assembly might remove either to Noyon or to Soissons, and he would repair to Compiègne. This offer was quickly rejected by the Assembly, Mirabeau remarking that to go to either of these places was only to put themselves more entirely at the mercy of the army. The insurrection in the capital was received with mingled feelings in the Assembly, by the majority with regret, and on July 13th, a second address was sent to the King, again pressing for the dismissal of the troops; but the King bluntly refused to yield; whereupon, on the motion of Lafayette, the Assembly declared the new ministers of the King were responsible for the state of affairs, and for whatever might ensue, and that "the Assembly, interpreter of the Nation's will, declares that M. Necker, and the other ministers who have been lately removed, carry with them their esteem and their regret; that, terrified at the fatal consequences which may attend the King's answer, they will never cease from insisting on the removal of the troops assembled in an unusual manner near Paris and Versailles, and upon the establishment of the bourgeois

¹ *View of the Causes*, etc., J. Moore, vol. i, pp. 299, 300.

guards".¹ This resolution was sent to the King on the 14th, with another prayer for the withdrawal of the troops, and on the 15th, a still sharper address had been voted, when the King, as we know, on this very day, was terrified into yielding by the events in Paris of the 14th; and the deputation, carrying the resolution, met the Duc de Liancourt on his way to announce the King's visit. In spite of all the turbulence around them, and their occasional bold interference with the designs of the court, the Assembly devoted their main energies to the preparation of a liberal constitution, and had determined to preface this by a declaration of the Rights of Man, the true foundation of all liberty, both social and political. The debates on this lasted long, and were interrupted, on August 4th, by the presentation of a report on the state of the country by a committee appointed for the purpose. Some discussion took place upon it, and at last the Viscomte de Noailles rose, and said that there was only one way of giving prosperity to France; the people were in arms to claim their rights, and it was the duty of the Assembly to make those rights legal, as well as moral: "I propose, therefore—1. That the committee be instructed to propose a declaration that every tax shall henceforward be levied in proportion to the income of each individual. 2. That the burdens of the State be equally borne by every

Annals of the French Revolution, Moleville, vol. i, pp. 216, 217.

member of the State. 3. That all feudal claims, which are not of a personal nature, shall be redeemable at a fair valuation. 4. That all the claims of the lord, which are of a personal nature, such as personal service, etc., shall cease without any ransom."¹ The motion was seconded by the Duc d'Aiguillon; M. le Grand pointed out that personal services, such as the *corvée*, ought not to be redeemed because they were inherently vicious, while the real rights, such as rents, ought to be fairly valued and ransomed. The motion was carried unanimously, and then, one after another, were sacrificed all feudal privileges, the nobles out-doing each other in the patriotic strife. The destruction of the local courts of justice, where the nobles ruled, the suppression of all sinecures, the abolition of the Game Laws, the seigneurial right of maintaining rabbit warrens, fisheries, and dovecotes, followed each other in quick succession. The clergy relinquished all fees taken from the poor, and proposed the abolition of all pluralities. Thus, in one single night, was swept away the feudal system of France, and the burdens of centuries were lifted from the shoulders of the people. "This night changed the face of the kingdom; it rendered all Frenchmen equal; they might all enter professions, aspire to property, take part in trade. In fact, this night was a revolution as important as the insurrection

¹ *Impartial History of the Late Revolution*, vol. i, p. 181. Ed. 1794.

of July 14th, of which it was the consequence."¹ These decrees were all referred to a committee, to be reduced into laws, and the only discussion of any importance was that which dealt with the clerical tithes. Abbé Sièyes strongly urged that the tithes were private property, and must not be touched; but Mirabeau answered: "No; tithes are not property . . . they are a contribution applied to that part of the public service which relates to the ministers of the altar; they are the subsidies wherewith the nation salaries the officers of morality and instruction. The nation abolishes ecclesiastical tithes, because they are an onerous method of paying a portion of the public service to which they are destined, and because it is easy to replace them in a manner less expensive and more equal."² The discussion was put an end to by a few of the clergy offering to give up tithes, and the rest speedily followed their example, the Archbishop of Paris declaring that the Church was willing to trust to the nation to provide the necessary funds for maintaining public worship.

The Assembly now returned to the consideration of the Declaration of the Rights of Man. Three forms were presented, by M. de Lafayette, Abbé Sièyes, and M. Mounier. None of these were, however, satisfactory, and a committee of five members, among whom was Mirabeau, was appointed

¹ *Histoire de la Révolution*, Mignet, vol. i, p. 99.

² *Mirabeau: a Life History*, vol. ii, p. 63.

to draw one up. Mirabeau's hand may be traced plainly in this celebrated Declaration, which is similar in many points to that contained in an "Address to the Dutch," which he published in 1788.¹ The date of the adoption of this Declaration is variously stated as the 18th, 20th, and 26th of August; it consists of seventeen articles, of which the most important are the following: "1. Men are born, and remain, free and equal in rights. Social distinctions can only be founded on the common good. 2. The aim of political association is the conservation of the natural and imprescriptible rights of man; these rights are—liberty, property, safety, and resistance of tyranny. 3. The principle of sovereignty resides essentially in the nation . . . 4. Liberty consists in being able to do everything which does not injure anyone else; thus the exercise of man's natural rights is only limited by the same exercise of rights by other members of society . . . 5. Laws may only forbid actions injurious to society . . . 6. Law is the expression of the general will. All citizens have a right to assist in making laws, either personally or through their representatives . . . 7. No man can be accused, arrested, nor detained, except by law, and according to legal forms . . . 10. None should be disturbed for his opinions, even for religious ones, provided that their manifestation does not disturb public order. 11. The free communication of thoughts and

¹ See *Mirabeau: a Life History*, vol. i, p. 268.

opinions is one of the most precious Rights of Man ; every citizen, then, may speak, write, and print freely, being responsible only to the law for abuse of this liberty. 14. All citizens have the right of examining personally, or by their representatives, into the necessity of public taxes, and of consenting to them freely . . . 17. Property being an inviolable and sacred right, none can be deprived of it, except when public necessity, legally proved, evidently requires it, and then only under condition of a just equivalent." Thus nobly did the National Assembly redeem the trust placed in their hands, and through Europe rang a cry, which America had earlier heard ; a cry which reached alike the palace of the Monarch and the hovel of the serf, shaking the throne of the one, and glowing on the hearth of the other. "Ye are free, ye are equal ; your union is for the common good. O Monarch, descend from your throne, for henceforth you are only the chief magistrate, freely elected, of a free nation. O peasant, raise your head, and look all men in the face, for your brow also is circled with the diadem of sovereignty, since you too are one of the people, the only King !"

Having thus dug deep the foundation, it remained to build thereupon the edifice of a free constitution, and during the month of September the practical questions of politics agitated the Assembly, and were echoed in the clubs, and in the Palais Royal ; for although only the Assembly could decree, yet

all men might discuss, and the eager Paris populace took its full share in these deliberations. The first question was : " Shall the Legislature consist of one Chamber or of two ? " Lally Tollendal, Mounier, and Necker, were all in favour of a Chamber of Deputies, and of a Senate, Mirabeau in favour of a single Chamber. And indeed, it is hard to see how a Second Chamber is defensible, when once it is acknowledged that all are equal, and that the only right of making laws for the people resides in the people. To have a Second Chamber is really to say : " The people alone can rightfully make laws, but yet over this people we will put a class, which shall judge, accept, or reject, as it seems good to it." But if it be true that the only rightful authority is in the people, then this second power, which is not elected by the people, is a wrongful authority, a tyranny that may justly be overthrown. It is argued that a single Chamber would be hasty, and pass crude and ill-thought-out laws ; the more reason, then, is there that the wisest heads in the nation should belong to that popular Assembly, and teach, judge, control it, by virtue of their brain and not of their office, as brethren speaking to brethren, and not as superiors addressing inferiors. The only country where a Second Chamber has been other than a serious stumbling-block is England, with its Lords and Commons, and why is this ? because, in England, the House of Lords is as the toy-bladder of a child which looks large and imposing, but

pricked with a needle, collapses without resistance. The House of Lords is only bearable because of its weakness, and the signal of its prolonged opposition would be the signal for its dissolution. As it is, this Second House has often delayed reforms for years, and has embittered and exasperated the strife without a chance of victory. We want no drag on the wheels of Progress, for there is ever drag sufficient in the sloth, in the indifference, in the selfishness of men, and the path is a path upward and not downward, and there is wanted a spur to the horses, but no drag on the wheels. With two Chambers it would have taken ten years to destroy French feudalism, cut down by a single Chamber in a single night. The indivisibility of the Assembly was carried on September 8th by 844 votes against 89.¹

The next important point regarded the Royal Sanction. "Should the King have a veto on the decrees passed by the Assembly?" and on this question Paris was specially moved, vehemently protesting against the veto, which was regarded as a remnant of tyranny. Mirabeau being in Paris, and recognised, the people surrounded him with tears in their eyes: "M. le Comte, you are a friend of the people; save us, defend us against the traitors who would bring back despotism. If the King obtains this veto, of what use is the National Assembly? Ah, M. le Comte, all is lost!" But Mirabeau, spite of this, argued earnestly for the veto. Robespierre,

¹ *Histoire de la Révolution*, Louis Blanc, p. 846.

as earnestly, against: "He who says that one man has a right to oppose himself to the law, says that the will of one man is above the will of all, he says that the nation is nothing, and that one man is everything. If he adds that this right belongs to him who is endowed with the executive power, he says that the man chosen by the nation to execute the will of the nation, has the right to contradict and enchain the will of that nation."¹ This is a point that concerns us all to-day, it being one of those which we shall have to decide. Shall a veto be vested in any one man? It appears to me that the only possible veto consistent with liberty is the kind of veto that a Prime Minister has at the present moment; if the Legislative Body passes a bill which he cannot accept, he may dissolve Parliament, and go to the country, and if the country endorses his veto, well and good; but if not, he must go out, and the measure is then carried in spite of him. The majority of the Assembly went with Robespierre, and a compromise was suggested—a suspensive veto instead of an absolute—and this was at last accepted by a majority of 678 against 325.² The existence of the Legislative Body was fixed at two years, and the person of the King was declared inviolable, and the Crown hereditary in the male line, for the Assembly was, as we have before stated, Monarchical and not Republican.

¹ *Life of Robespierre*, G. H. Lewes, p. 107.

² *Histoire de la Révolution*, Louis Blanc, p. 333.

During this time Necker had twice applied to the Assembly for the sanction of loans, but each loan had produced but little money; and on September 24th, he was once more obliged to ask for assistance, and he proposed an income-tax of 25 per cent; after a sharp debate, during which Mirabeau spoke twice in favour of the tax, the Assembly seemed on the point of rejecting it, when Mirabeau sprang into the tribune once more: "Two centuries of depredations and robberies have created the gulf wherein the kingdom is in danger of being swallowed up: it must be filled—this terrible chasm. Well, then, behold here the list of French proprietors; select from among them the richest, in order to sacrifice the fewest citizens; but select; for shall not a small number perish for the mass of the people? Come, then, these two thousand notables possess sufficient to choke the deficit, re-establish the order of your finances, the peace and prosperity of the kingdom: strike! immolate without pity these wretched victims—cast them in the abyss; it will then close. You recoil with horror—timid men! pusillanimous men! Alas! can ye not see that in proclaiming a bankruptcy—or, what is yet more odious, in rendering it inevitable without proclaiming it—you will be stained by an act ten thousand times more criminal? . . . And do you imagine, because you will not have paid, you will then owe nothing? Do you imagine that the thousands, the millions, of men who will lose in an instant, by that terrible explosion, or by

its reaction, all that constituted the consolation of their life, and perchance their only means of sustenance—that they will leave you peaceably to fatten on your crime? . . . Vote, then, this extraordinary subsidy; may it be sufficient! Vote it, because, if you have any doubts upon the methods—doubts vague and unenlightened—you have none upon the necessity; none upon impotence to replace it; immediately at the least. Vote it, because the public circumstances suffer no retard, and we should be accountable for all delay . . . To-day, bankruptcy, hideous bankruptcy, is there; it threatens to consume yourselves, your properties, and your honour—and you deliberate!"¹ The Assembly was carried away, and the tax was voted.

Meanwhile, the King was hesitating about endorsing the Declaration of the Rights of Man, and the articles of the Constitution already agreed upon, and he seemed inclined to put his suspensive veto in force at once. The articles were presented on October 2nd, and the Royal answer was that the King "would, in due time, make his intentions regarding those articles known".² The Assembly was but ill-pleased, in spite of their vote on the veto, and some hints flew about that the King desired delay, in order that he might escape to Metz; and we find Mirabeau—who had so strangely pleaded for the absolute veto—saying drily: "It seems to

¹ *Mirabeau, a Life History*, pp. 70, 72.

² *A View of the Causes*, etc., Moore, vol. i, p. 487.

me that we should do well to vote an address to the King, and say to him with the same frankness and truth as the court fool of Philippe conveyed in the trivial sentence: 'What would you do, Philippe, if all the world said *no* when you said *yes*?' " Mirabeau's real self, obscured for a moment, breaks out again brilliantly in these suggestive words. A deputation was appointed to go to the King, and pray for his sanction at once, but before it was appointed, Maillard and his followers were knocking at the doors of the Assembly. When, as we know, Mounier went to the palace with a deputation of women, fifteen deputies accompanied him, to press for the "acceptation pure and simple"; and after four hours' delay, during which Mounier waited perseveringly, the King gave way, fearing to refuse. It was the misfortune of Louis always to cling to despotism long enough to irritate, and then to give way before fear, yielding to terror what he would not yield to justice, so that he was at once hated for his tyranny and despised for his cowardice.

On the following day 100 members of the Assembly were deputed to accompany the King to Paris, it having been voted, upon the motion of Mirabeau, that "the Assembly was inseparable from the person of the King"; and on October 19th, the whole body began its formal sittings in the capital, in the palace of the Archbishop of Paris, until the riding-house of the Tuileries, which had been selected for their meetings, was ready for their reception. At

this period there was a lamentable defection from the Assembly, for Lally Tollendal and Mounier deserted their posts angry at not carrying out their own ideas in the constitution. Some 300 less important deputies followed their example, but the work of reform went on with unabated vigour. We may note, in passing, that the Breton Club now took up its abode at the Convent of the Jacobins, and became the Jacobin Club. Mirabeau, Robespierre, Alexandre, and Charles Lameth, with many other members of the Assembly, belonged to this formidable club. Shortly afterwards, the extreme section of the Jacobins broke off, and became the Club of the Cordeliers, and there Danton made his power; Danton, the Mirabeau of the populace. The other extreme, the Royalist, also broke off, and located themselves in the Feuillant Convent, and was called the Club of '89, or the Feuillant Club, and of this Lafayette was the central sun.

One of the earliest acts of the Assembly in Paris was to pass an Act equivalent to our Riot Act. A baker, accused of keeping back bread from the people, who waited outside to be served, was dragged out, hanged, and beheaded. The murderer and another ringleader were promptly arrested, tried, and executed; and it was in consequence of this murder that it was proposed that, in case of riot, the magistrates might call out the soldiers, proclaim martial law, raise a red flag, and if the crowds did

not disperse, might then order the troops to fire. Mirabeau and Robespierre opposed the Act, but it was, nevertheless, passed.

The Assembly now devoted itself to the consideration of ecclesiastical property. Talleyrand, Bishop of Autun, on October 10th, had argued that the clergy were not proprietors, and that the nation would do well to resume into its own hands all ecclesiastical property, give salaries to the clergy, and apply the superfluous funds to the payment of the public debt. The Church property, at this time, was valued at £18,000,000 a year, and of the land of France one-third was in the hands of the clergy. Maury and Abbé Sièyes were the principal defenders of the Church monopoly, while Mirabeau was the resistless champion of the nation. "Seamen," he said, "never appropriated to themselves the vessels which the nation built to defend the State. . . . Shall, then, the clergy alone be permitted to say that the victories achieved by its piety over that of the faithful are to belong to it, and to remain inviolable, instead of constituting a portion of the indivisible domain of the State?"¹ and on November 2nd, Mirabeau submitted the following decree: "1. That all ecclesiastical property is at the disposition of the nation, but charged with providing, in a proper manner, for the expenses of divine worship, the maintenance of its ministers, and the relief of the poor, under the inspection and according to the

¹ *Mirabeau, a Life History*, vol. ii, p. 111.

instruction of the provinces. 2. That in the disposition to be made for supplying the ministers of religion, the sums to be settled on parish priests shall in no instance be less than 1,200 francs (£48), exclusive of the house and garden appendant."¹ This resolution was passed on the same day by 568 votes against 346, and the stipends of the State officers of religion were shortly after fixed, much to the detriment of the prelates and to the benefit of the hardworking inferior clergy. The Archbishop of Paris received an income of 50,000 francs (£2,000); the chief bishoprics were fixed at 25,000 francs (£ 1,000); the next at 18,750 (£ 750); the smallest at 12,500 (£ 500); the clergy received 2,000 (£ 80), 1,500 (£60), and 1,200 (£ 48), according to the size of their parishes.² The internal organisation of the Church was also altered a little later; the number of bishops was made the same as the number of departments, and both bishops and clergy were to be elected for the future by the people. Such, roughly sketched, was the civil constitution of the Gallican Church, as adopted by the Assembly, and a year later forcibly imposed upon the clergy of France. While the Assembly were thus busy with the Church, Abbé Sièyes had been labouring at a plan for the re-organisation of the internal administration of France, with the assistance of a committee appointed by the Assembly. By this project France

¹ *Annals of the French Revolution*, Moleville, vol. ii, p. 189.

² *History of Europe*, Alison, vol. i, p. 324.

was divided into 83 departments, in lieu of the old provinces, whose differences and semi-independence caused much inconvenience. Each department had its own council, composed of 36 members, and an executive composed of 5. The departments were divided into districts, each with its own governing body, and the district, for electoral purposes only, was divided into cantons, containing each some 5 or 6 parishes. Every active citizen had a vote, the "activity" depending on the payment of some 3 francs yearly, equivalent to 3 days' work; and this was, practically, the establishment of universal suffrage. These citizens chose the electors, who, in their turn, elected the deputies for the National Assembly, the members of the departmental and district councils, the magistrates, and, later, the bishops and parochial clergy. There was a criminal court for the whole department, civil courts for the districts, and minor "courts of the peace" for the cantons. In towns the administration was confided to a council and to a municipality; the municipality were elected directly by the people, and had alone the right to call out the troops. Such was the project due principally to the organising genius of Abbé Sièyes, and which is, perhaps, as perfect a system of democratic internal government as could be devised. It was adopted by the Assembly on December 22nd,¹ but the discussion appears to have been continued into the following January.

¹ *Histoire de la Révolution*, Mignet, vol. i, pp. 137, 138.

The old Parliaments were suspended by a decree of November 3rd, "buried alive," as Alexandre Lameth jokingly called it, and so—not without much protestation on their part, and some rioting—passed out of existence for evermore.

In addition to these vast labours, the Assembly found time to abolish the terrible *lettres de cachet*, which, little used in the reign of Louis XVI, had wrought so much misery under preceding Monarchs. These infamous documents were obtainable through any court influence, and were used in the most arbitrary fashion. If a wife wanted to be rid of her husband, and was herself fair enough to interest the King, or the King's favourites, she might gain a *lettre de cachet*, and throw him into prison; if a husband were jealous of his wife, he might use the same weapon; there was no possibility of rescue, or of redress, for there was no accusation, no trial, no stated sentence. The victim was simply seized, thrown into a dungeon, and sometimes forgotten by his oppressor. These warrants were often given away in blank by the ministers, duly signed, to be used by the receivers as and when they pleased, and they were even sold to applicants. M. de Florentin is said to have given away no less than 50,000.¹ But, in speaking against these *lettres de cachet* to an English audience, it is impossible to forget that in Ireland to-day Government is vested with this same arbitrary power of imprisonment without trial

¹ *History of the Revolution*, Michelet, vol. i, p. 63.

or open accusation. Not long ago a man was liberated, who, for three years, had languished in prison, untried, unsentenced, and at the end of the three years his prison doors were opened, and he was bidden go free. And that same power is wielded still, and men or women may be arrested, and they simply disappear; and this execrable tyranny weighs upon Ireland on the plea—the tyrant's plea—of necessity, and causes secret plotting, instead of open protest, and an ever-growing danger of revolt. When such despotism is practised abroad, and the people rebel, we are ready with warm sympathy for the gallant patriots who strike a blow for Freedom; but in Ireland *c'est toute autre chose*, for we love Liberty at a distance, but call her treason when she breathes on Irish hearts. If the old English spirit were among us, the English people would rise up against this tyranny in the sister isle; but the Brunswick rule has so degraded us that Hampden's spirit is dead in England. Dead, do I say? Ah! not dead, but sleeping.

Within these few months also the *gabelle* was abolished, and thus another heavy and most irritating burden was removed, and various small taxes on leather, oil, soap, starch, and iron were taken off, to the encouragement of commerce.¹ Distinctions of dress between the orders in the Assembly were also removed.

¹ *Impartial History*, etc., vol. i, p. 309.

It was during the discussion on the Penal Code during this winter that Dr. Guillotin introduced to the notice of the Assembly his machine for cutting off heads, whisking them off in a moment, he said, without pain—almost as though the operation were rather a pleasant one—and the Assembly approved his machine, and adopted it, the guillotine of the Revolution. And in this discussion Robespierre's voice was also heard, pleading vehemently against capital punishment, which he called "judicial murder".

One other most important point must be noted, and that is the first issue of *assignats*, or paper money. These were first issued with security on the ecclesiastical property resumed by the nation, and given to the State creditors, who might either redeem them by claiming an equivalent portion of land, or might put them in circulation, and thus they speedily passed from hand to hand, and developed into a paper currency.

Thus far had the Assembly travelled in its great path when, on February 4th, the King entered the hall—his coming only notified by a letter to the President the same morning—and in a speech, perhaps the best he ever made, he declared his approval of the work they were doing, although he frankly said that he had hoped to have directed things "in a milder and more tranquil manner". He spoke a little warningly about the value and use of a hereditary nobility, but quickly added that

he hoped those who had lost privileges would find "consolation in the public advantages," as he himself did, "and it is from the bottom of my heart I here say this. I will defend," he continued, "then, and maintain the constitutional liberty, the principles of which have been consecrated by the general wish in union with mine". He promised to train his son to do the same, in words at once wise and touching, which space alone forbids us to quote. He then urged them to endeavour to check all tumult; "do you, who have such means of influencing the public, convince the people, who are misled, of their real interests; that people who are so dear to me, and by whom they, who would console me for my anxieties, assure me that I am beloved . . . Let those who yet feel reluctant to join heartily in a spirit of harmony, become so necessary, sacrifice to me all their painful recollections, and I will repay them with my gratitude and affection. Let us all, and I set you the example, profess but one opinion, one interest, one will, an attachment for the new constitution, and an ardent desire for the peace, happiness, and prosperity of France."¹ Warm and loud applause greeted the King; and even though we know his later treachery, we would fain believe that Louis was temporarily sincere in this speech of his, for to his weak nature the emotion of the moment was the real one. The civil oath was now taken.

¹ *Annals of the French Revolution*, Moleville, vol ii, pp. 264, 277.

"I swear to be faithful to the Nation, to the Law, and to the King, and to maintain, with all my power, the constitution decreed by the National Assembly, and accepted by the King."¹ This oath was taken by all the members of the Assembly, save four of the nobility, one of whom was Mirabeau's younger brother, the Vicomte de Mirabeau, a violent Royalist; and he, breaking his sword across his knee, said savagely: "When the King breaks his sceptre, his servants must break their swords."² The oath was taken also all over France with eager enthusiasm, by men and women, by old and young, and from the 5th to the 15th of February all was festivity and rejoicing, without a cloud.

We must just notice the publication of the "Red Book" at this time—a book containing a list of Royal pensioners and paid favourites—because it caused much bitter feeling towards the King. In this book the brothers Lameth found the expenses of their education paid by Marie Antoinette, and immediately refunded the amount to the Royal treasury. Two more important decisions of the Assembly are all that we have time to note in this hasty review: the debate on religious toleration, and on the right of the King to declare war.

On February 18th the Bishop of Nancy had proposed that only the Catholic religion should have an authorised worship, but a contest had been

¹ *Memoirs*, Weber, vol. ii, p. 255.

² *Ibid.*, p. 256.

avoided by a remark of Charles Lameth that such a decree was needless, as the Assembly manifestly followed the spirit of the Gospel by abasing the high and raising the humble. On April 12th, while the Assembly was discussing the suppression of monasteries, a Carthusian friar, Dom Gerles, proposed that "The Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman religion is, and shall ever be, the religion of the nation, and that its worship is the only one authorised."¹ A vehement debate took place; it was the whole question of religious toleration, and yet to alienate the clergy was to create a terrible foe to the Revolution. Mirabeau struck the keynote of the fear, and transformed it into a warning not to give power to the clergy. "Recall to mind that from hence—from this very tribune where I am speaking—I behold the window of the palace, wherein the factions, *uniting temporal interests to the most sacred interests of religion*, sent forth from the hand of a King of the French the fatal shot which was the signal for the massacre of St. Bartholomew." The Duc de la Rochefoucault proposed the following motion: "The National Assembly, considering that they neither have, nor can have, any power over the consciences or religious opinions of men; that the majesty of religion, and the profound respect due to it, should prevent its becoming the subject of a debate . . . resolve, that they neither can,

¹ *History of the French Revolution*, Michelet, vol. ii, p. 850.

nor ought to, come to any determination respecting the proposed motion, and that they will resume the order of the day."¹ Thus admirably and justly did this great Assembly treat the momentous question, and set an example to every State to refuse to interfere with the matter of religion, religion being a matter for the private judgment of the individual, and not for the dictation of the State. The mistake made by the Assembly—which resulted in most fatal consequences—lay in not thoroughly carrying out this principle by refusing to have anything to do with the payment of the clergy. Had it been thoroughly consistent, the struggle could not have arisen as to the "civil constitution" imposed on the clergy, and the cry of persecution could not have been raised. Toleration, so popular among ourselves, is better than despotism, but shares in its nature, for, as was justly said, "the power to tolerate implies the possibility of oppression." Absolute equality of religions is the only justice in a State whose citizens hold varying creeds.

On May 14th came forward the question as to the right of declaring war, did it belong to the King or to the nation? The King, alarmed by the attitude of England, had ordered preparations to be made for defence, and applied to the Assembly for the necessary funds. The Right declared that the

¹ *Annals of the French Revolution*, Moleville, vol. ii. pp. 329, 330.

exclusive right of making war belonged to the King; the Left maintained that it belonged to the nation, and therefore to the Assembly. The debate went on, day after day, until on May 20th Mirabeau arose, to propose a middle course: that the right to declare war belonged to the nation, and that the Executive of the nation should be invested with this right, but that war could only be carried out with the consent of the Legislative Body, who supplied the funds. He proposed also that the Legislature should have the right of disbanding the army on the return of peace, for the army was the army of the nation, and the Legislature must guard the country from the danger of a victorious King turning the army against the constitution. He went on: "Annihilate ambition! let the King have nothing to sigh for but that which the law can afford him; render his magistracy what it ought to be, and entertain, then, no further apprehensions that a Royal renegade, abdicating his throne, will run the chance of hastening from a victory to the block." Here came loud cries as to "the King's inviolability," answered back quickly by the orator: "You have heard the extreme case I was supposing; that of an arbitrary and despotic Monarch who, having revolted against his people, returns home with an army of Frenchmen, to repossess himself of the citadels of tyranny; now, *a King so situated is a King no longer.*"¹ Our Mirabeau is, methinks, somewhat hampered by his

¹ *Mirabeau*, vol. ii. p, 132.

Royalism, and about as consistent here as he was on the veto: "a veto?" yes, so long as the King remembers that his "no" must not meet the people's "yes"; the "King inviolable"? yes, for just so long as his subjects are inviolable, so long as he breaks no laws; if he commits treason he ceases to be a King, and may be brought to the block. Capital punishment is always bad: "but while capital punishment obtains in any country, I know no reason that the headsman's axe should be blunted and turned from a King's neck."¹ The debate continued for two days more, Barnave replying to Mirabeau on the 21st, and Mirabeau speaking once more on the 22nd. During these two days Mirabeau was bitterly abused, and a pamphlet was cried in the streets of Paris: "Exposure of the great treason of the Comte de Mirabeau." But not for popular threats, any more than for Royal frowns, would Mirabeau falter, only answered quietly: "I must come back victorious or torn in pieces"; triumphant he came, through the power of his mighty eloquence, and carried his proposition through the Assembly, which decreed that "war can only be decided by a decree of the National Assembly, which shall be passed in consequence of a formal and requisite proposal by the King," and "every declaration of war shall be made in these terms: on the part of the King of the French, and in the name of the Nation"; it is unnecessary to

¹ *Cromwell and Washington*, C. Bradlaugh, p. 14.

quote the whole decree, which throughout puts the executive power in the King, subject to the approval of the Legislature.¹

It had been in contemplation for some time to signalise the framing of the constitution by a grand ceremony of Federation, which should be held separately in each of the new departments, and completed by a grand central Festival in Paris itself; the King, Assembly, National Guards, and people, all uniting in the oath of obedience. The idea was welcomed with rapture, and the great plain of the *Champ de Mars* was selected as the scene of the Federation, and the giant work commenced of transforming it into an amphitheatre. It was rumoured that the 12,000 men employed would not be sufficient for the labour, and immediately the whole of Paris took axe and shovel, and set to work: lady in silk and sempstress in cotton, lord in velvet and workmen in fustian, delicate-handed aristocrat and hard-handed labourer, fishwoman and nun, friar and actor, courtier and beggar, all betake themselves to the digging of earth and the trundling of barrows, day after day, and night after night, never ceasing for a moment, fresh hands seizing the tools that tired hands have thrown down, and in a week a vast amphitheatre is hollowed out that will hold 400,000 people. And before the outward distinctions are

¹ See *Annals of the Revolution* Moleville, vol. ii, pp. 412, 415.

thus confounded in the *Champ de Mars* they have all been destroyed in the Assembly, for on June 18th that indefatigable body swept away all titles of nobility, and bade every man use his own family name without prefix. A silly decree enough, for just as titles are childish and absurd, so it is childish and absurd to make such a fuss about abolishing them, and when men are known by one name it is foolish to make them take another which is not known. Mirabeau flatly—and very sensibly—refused to use the name of M. Riquetti, and growling that they had set Europe puzzling for three days with their Riquetti. Who would recognise Lafayette as M. Motier? The fact is, that a title should never be accepted by a Democrat; but if a man is born with one, and has worn it long, he will not make a puerility of importance by parading his rejection of it. Titles are the toys of the childhood of humanity, and will be gradually dropped as the race outgrows them; let them die out, no Republican assuming one either by creation or by inheritance, and they will go where have gone the children's last year's dolls.

The *Champ de Mars* was ready on July 14th, for the anniversary of the taking of the Bastille has rightly been chosen for the federation of the nation, free after such long centuries of slavery. For days past deputations had been coming in from all directions, representatives of National Guards, representatives of departments, representatives of

the army and of the fleet; even a deputation from the whole human race, headed by a certain Baron Anacharsis Clootz, which appeared before the Assembly on June 19th, and prayed for a place—the said deputation being composed of various strangers picked up in Paris, and wearing each his national dress! All were to meet together on the eventful day, and swear the oath of fidelity to King, law, and nation. In the midst of the *Champ de Mars* rises a vast altar, and on the rising sides of the amphitheatre sits—or stands—a vast crowd, computed at some 400,000 persons; and at one point glitters the throne of the King, who, with the Queen and Dauphin, surrounded by the National Assembly, has now taken his place. Bishop Talleyrand, of Autun, is to perform mass at the altar, and ranged on its step stand 200 priests, white-robed and girded with sashes of tricolour Revolution. Unfortunately, the rain comes down furiously, and drenches everything; but enthusiasm can by no means be put out by rain. Mass over, Bishop Talleyrand blesses all the eighty-three tricolour banners, and then General de Lafayette advances, to take the oath for the National Guards of France. He ascends the steps, lays his sword-point on the Bible, and raises his other hand: "We swear to be ever faithful to the Nation, to the Law, and to the King; to maintain, so far as in us lies, the Constitution decreed by the National Assembly and accepted by the King." Memorable oath! in which

the Nation and the Law come before the King, and if clash of duties arises, the first shall win the day. Then the President of the Assembly swears, his comrades standing up around him ; and the King himself swears last of all, standing up by his throne : " I, King of the French, I swear to use all the power, delegated to me by constitutional law, to maintain the Constitution decreed by the National Assembly, and accepted by myself, and to see that the laws are executed."¹ Cannon thunder out at the end of the Royal oath, and are echoed from summit to summit all through France, cannon after cannon receiving the news, and passing it on further ; and before the sun goes down all men know that King Louis XVI has accepted the Revolution, and has sworn fealty to the nation. And that day all is joy and gaiety ; Paris is illuminated, and a public ball is held on the spot where the Bastille once frowned grimly, and surely all is well with France.

¹ *View of the Causes, etc.*, J. Moore, vol. ii, p. 166.

LECTURE V

FROM JULY 14, 1790, TO THE FALL OF THE MONARCHY

ALL indeed might have been well with France if the heart had spoken with the lips when Louis pledged his faith to his people, and swore to be loyal to the nation. But, alas ! the King was not true, and his oath was but a gilded falsehood, and with a smile he wooed France to trust him, in order that he might win her and betray. And for a while France believed in him, though sorely distressed by internal quarrels ; for the clergy refused to submit to the new Constitution, and would not take the oath, and at last, it being found that they were everywhere stirring up discontent and spreading sedition, were plotting against the public peace and inciting to rebellion, a sharp decree was passed—November 27th—that they must either take the oath or be ejected from their benefices, since the State could not retain as its paid servants those who were plotting its overthrow. The Pope declared against the oath ; and the majority of the clergy accordingly refused to take it, and thereby at once

became objects of suspicion and hatred to the people, and were regarded as enemies of the State. Those who received the Sacrament from the non-juring clergy were suspected, and mistrust and fear speedily replaced confidence and security. It was the natural result of the fatal mistake of the Assembly—the meddling, in any fashion, with the internal affairs of the Church.

And now of the King himself there begins to be some doubt, although he had signed the decree of ejection on January 21st, 1791; for was he not desiring to go to St. Cloud for this coming Easter, so that he might receive the Sacrament from the hands of one of these treacherous priests, and in so doing break his own oath, of July 14th, to put the laws in execution, and to be faithful to the Constitution? Of encouraging such priests he was directly accused, on April 18th, by a paper posted on the walls of the Palais Royal by order of the Club of Cordeliers, and it was further said that he was preparing to leave Paris and to join the enemy abroad. Thus came it, that when the King and Queen were on the point of starting for St. Cloud, a crowd had gathered who said they should not leave Paris, and who cut the traces of the horses; and in spite of Lafayette and Mayor Bailly the people would by no means be persuaded; and after sitting for three hours in the Royal coach, the King and Queen had to dismount and re-enter the Tuileries, highly indignant, but powerless.

And to whom to look for aid? To Mirabeau? Alas! Mirabeau is dead, dead on April 2nd, and shall no more sway the Assembly with the might of his tongue and the power of his giant brain. But ere we bid Mirabeau farewell, we must glance over the last months of his stormy life, for there had been some chance for King and Queen had Mirabeau lived, strange as his name and that of Royalty sound when linked in one. For Mirabeau, ever Royalist at heart, had begun to think that the Revolution was going too far, and to desire that the King should be freer to act than he could be, just now, at Paris; and he took the opportunity of visiting the Queen, when the court was staying awhile at St. Cloud, and determined to throw his influence on the Royal side. He made preparations for the escape of the King to Rouen, and for enabling him to take the position of a Constitutional Monarch, with power, although the power were limited; but all these new hopes were dashed to the ground by the illness of the planner. For months he had been dying, this mighty Mirabeau, worn out, partly, alas! by his own excesses—excesses in which he indulged the more now that he was largely supplied with money; for the court—and the thought grates on one—gave him money in plenty, hoping thus to secure his services, and Mirabeau flung it about carelessly, as he had ever done, in reckless fashion. Yet think I not that Mirabeau was *bought*, for he was carrying out that which he

judged wisest for France ; had he been purchasable, then would the court have bribed him earlier, and so have won his matchless tongue for the support of despotism ; but Mirabeau never sided with the King until the Absolute Monarchy was destroyed, and the Constitutional Monarchy, which he desired, was in danger. On March 27th he went to the Assembly for the last time, then staggered home dizzily, and lay down for evermore. In vain all Paris crowds around his door ; in vain King Louis sends to ask for news ; in vain the citizens keep watch day and night, turning back all carriages, that no sound of wheels may disturb his quietude. Loyal are ye, O people, to your leader ; but it is all in vain ; and on April 2nd, 1791, the words pass from mouth to mouth, *Mirabeau is dead*. A pall descends upon the city ; tears are in every eye ; *Mirabeau is dead*. A ball is stopped abruptly ; *Mirabeau is dead*. One remarks " It is a fine day " ; " Very fine ; but *Mirabeau is dead*." Yes ! Mirabeau is dead, and with him dies the Monarchy of France. He is dead ; the strong brain has ceased to work ; the eloquent tongue is silent for evermore ; to use his own dying words, he has entered " into that slumber wherefrom there is no awaking ".¹ He was buried, and followed to the grave by such a gathering as only honours the true Kings of men ; all France wept for Mirabeau, and bowed at the feet of the mighty dead.

¹ *Mirabeau, a Life History*, vol. ii, p. 272.

And now the tragedy steadily unrolls itself, the tragedy whose climax is to be the death of a King. Far had things gone when a crowd had forced the King to return to the Tuileries, and the National Guard had refused to clear his way. Far, indeed, but was there not a cause? Plots were ever being discovered, plots to snatch the King from Paris and to use him against the nation. Ever since October, 1789, these plots had followed each other rapidly, and in February the Chevalier de Favras, for one of them, was arrested, tried, and executed. On the frontiers, at Coblenz, were the emigrant Princes and nobles, threatening invasion, and rumours—all too well founded—of Royal alliances against France were passed from lip to lip. Still, for a while, the people trusted on, and Louis and his family had before this peacefully visited St. Cloud, and had returned to Paris. Ah! if Louis had only been loyal, he might have lived and died King of France, but he was as wax in the hands of his Queen, and Marie Antoinette was firm-fixed either to slay the Revolution, or to be slain by it. So, before this second proposed visit, things had changed; suspicions had become certainties, and various causes had concurred to anger the people; there had been a revolt at Nancy, suppressed with cruel severity by the Marquis de Bouillé, General in the East, and Louis had approved and had praised the sanguinary blow; a riot had occurred at Vincennes, promptly checked by Lafayette, who, returning to Paris, found a

tumult at the Tuileries; for a strange gathering had taken place of some 600 gentlemen, all clad in black and armed, and it was said that the King, during the absence of Lafayette, had hoped to escape from Paris, protected by these "Knights of the dagger," but the guards had arrested them rapidly, had disarmed and flung them out of the palace roughly enough, though none were seriously hurt. All this, joined to the King's doubtful loyalty to the Constitution—as evidenced by the favour shown to the non-juring priest—completed the popular suspicion, and determined the people that the King should stay in Paris, where he could be watched. And the suspicions were just: Louis *was* plotting against France. On December 3rd, 1790, he had written to the King of Prussia, saying: "I have addressed the Emperor of Germany, the Empress of Russia, and the Kings of Spain and Sweden, and *I have suggested to them the idea of a congress of the principal powers of Europe, supported by an armed force*, as the best measure to check the progress of faction here . . . I trust that your Majesty will approve my ideas, and maintain the strictest secrecy respecting the step I have taken in this matter, as you will feel that the critical position in which I am placed at present compels me to use the greatest circumspection."¹ At Mantua, on May 20th, 1791, the Emperor of

¹ *History of the Girondists*, Lamartine, vol. i, p. 192. Bohn's Ed., 1848.

Austria met the Comte de Durfort, confidential agent of Louis, and the Count carried back to his King the secret arrangement, composed of twenty-one articles, which assured the co-operation of Prussia, arranged a protest from Spain, Naples, Parma, and Austria at the end of August, stated that a correspondence had been kept up with members of the old Parliaments, which Parliaments should be re-established, and should pronounce null and void all the decrees of the Assembly, and promised an army of 100,000 men, formed in five columns, which should simultaneously invade France at different points; Austria supplied 85,000; Germany, 14,000; Switzerland, 14,000; Sardinia, 15,000; Spain, 20,000; the French regiments who remained "faithful" were to join the invaders on their advance.¹ Such was the scheme sanctioned by Louis, who, on the 18th of April previous had sent, and published, a letter to all his Ambassadors, in order that there "might no longer remain any doubt of the King's complete approbation of the new form of Government he had sworn to maintain"; and in which, among many other phrases equally sincere, he had said, that "the most dangerous enemies of the nation were those who circulated doubts of the King's love of the Constitution".² And yet it is to be wondered at that the people were suspicious of Louis! Once

¹ *A View of the Causes*, etc., J. Moore, vol. II, pp. 310—320.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 300—303.

more the suspicions are verified. The Marquis de Bouillé prays the King to fly, for his army is ready ; and on June 20th, late at night, the King, Queen, Madame Elizabeth, and the two Royal children, with their governess, slip from the Tuileries by different doors, unperceived, and drive rapidly away. Post horses await them at each stage, and all night long and all day they travel, till night falls again, and still no sign of pursuit is seen ; they have reached Varennes at last, and surely they are safe, although they have failed to meet any of the soldiers whom De Bouillé should have posted along the line, for at Varennes another troop should be in waiting. De Bouillé had done his work, but these detachments had aroused suspicion, and had fallen back slowly, fearing to create a tumult, and so ruin all ; and at St. Ménéhould, the stage before Varennes, the King carelessly leans forward, and the son of the post-master, Drouet, sees him and starts. He draws out an assignat, and compares the Royal portrait it bears with the traveller in the coach ; and he gets him to horse and rides forward, over hedge and ditch, and reaches Varennes before the fugitives, and gives warning. National Guards are aroused, and messengers sent to surrounding villages, and a waggon is overturned in the road, and when the Royal carriage rolls up all is ready, with De Bouillé's hussars safely blockaded in the house where they are waiting. And now M. Sausse, the Procureur, steps forward as the coach stops, and blandly invites

the travellers to alight and take some refreshment while the horses are being changed; the King accepts, fearing to arouse suspicion by refusal, and in a moment the alarm bell rings out in the stillness, and presently M. Sausse re-enters, and accosts the King by name. The King tries to persuade him that he is mistaken, but at last, seeing that deception is useless, prays M. Sausse to let him flee, and the Queen begs too, with tears, but all in vain. On the morrow morning the horses are re-harnessed, with their heads turned Paris-wards, and just then gallops up an aide-de-camp of Lafayette, with a decree of the Assembly to arrest the King and bring him back. Three commissioners meet them on the way home, and accompany them to Paris, and they pass through the city, through thick crowds, who stand in sullen silence—for a popular notice has been posted up: "Whoever applauds the King shall be cudgelled; whoever insults him shall be hanged"¹—so the dreary procession defiles through mute multitudes, until as the carriage stops, and the captured fugitives alight, there break out some sharp curses, not unmingled with menaces. Strict guard was now kept by Lafayette, indignant at pretended trust and secret treachery, and the Assembly passed a decree of "provisional suspension of the King from the functions of Royalty," since, by an article of the Constitution, deposition awaited the King who fled his kingdom. The one

¹ *Memoirs*, Weber, vol. ii, p. 396.

question now was: "Shall the King be put on his trial?" and loud voices in the clubs demanded the dethronement of the Monarch who had broken faith with the nation, and had fled to seek foreign bayonets wherewith to prop his Throne. And, truly, if treason to a King be a crime to be avenged, is treason to a Nation to go unpunished? is perjury no sin when it comes from Royal lips? is a King not accountable when he seeks to destroy the Constitution that he has sworn to defend against all attacks? O Royal traitor! O perjured King! justly art thou summoned to the bar; and yet even for thee there is still forgiveness, if even now thou wilt be true, and wilt sheathe the foreign sword which thy hand is guiding to strike at the heart of France.

Now is first heard the cry for a Republic, and it comes from a band of sturdy Republicans, among whom we distinguish Condorcet, Brissot, and our own Thomas Paine, for the latter, having aided to found a Republic in America, now comes to lend his pen to the cause of Liberty in France. These issued a periodical paper, the *Republican*, and in its first number we read: "The absence of a King is worth more than his presence, since he is not only a political superfluity, but is also a very heavy burden, weighing on all the nation." We may note—in passing—that one of the most unwise things the great Assembly did, was to send after the runaway Monarch when he was taking himself out of the way. The Crown had fallen, the Throne

was empty on the 21st of June. Why, then, bring back Louis and set him thereon, to be hereafter forced to empty the seat again by cutting off crown and head together? The Assembly decided that they could not, according to the Constitution, bring the King to trial, since he had not left France (which was true enough), and much indignation was expressed at this decision. Brissot drew up a petition for the deposition of Louis, and on July 17th, it was laid for signature on the altar of the country in the Champ de Mars. Men and women flocked to sign, and, unfortunately, after a while, two men were discovered, hidden underneath the altar, with what purpose none can tell; they asseverated that they were only there to see the signing; but, to say the least, they had chosen a peculiar position for sight-seeing. The word ran round that they were spies of the court, and they were massacred.

General Lafayette, very shortly after, came up with his guards, and with Mayor Bailly carrying the red flag. The assemblage was summoned to disperse, and a volley was fired over the heads of the crowd; it was answered with cries of, "Down with the red flag," and then a volley was fired point-blank, some—the number is doubtful—were killed, and the rest dispersed. There seems no doubt that Lafayette and Bailly herein acted with needless severity, since no rioting was going on when they arrived, and the people had a perfect right to sign a petition if they chose. Neither the general nor the

mayor ever regained their former popularity, and the blood they had spilt sank deep into the hearts of the people. The chief instigators of the affair now feared for their safety; Danton and Camille Desmoulins fled to Marseilles, and Marat concealed himself in a subterranean abode, an old lurking-place of his when his paper brought him into trouble, and all things settled down quietly.

It is quite possible that matters would have gradually arranged themselves if France had now been left to herself, but the friends of Louis were busily digging the mine whose explosion should shatter the Throne. For the Emperor of Austria and the King of Prussia met the Comte d'Artois at Pilnitz, and by the celebrated "Declaration of Pilnitz," August 27th, 1791, sealed the fate of the Monarchy of France. They founded a league of crowned heads, saying that the situation of Louis "concerned the interests of every Sovereign in Europe," and asking all other powers to make common cause against the French people, aye, bribing them by a secret treaty, which gave some of the fairest territories of a dismembered France to those who would aid in the unholy struggle. Thus did Europe's Kings throw down the gauntlet against Liberty, and the bloodshed of the following summer may be traced directly to the invasion which was the result of this infamous league. For the

¹ *Annals of the French Revolution*, Moleville, vol. iv, pp. 343.

Sovereigns clustered round, like the carrion vultures, deeming that France would be stricken to the death, and would fall an easy prey; and France arose, strong in her new-born liberty, and with face stern-fixed against her challengers, and purging herself, in mad haste, from traitors at home, she flung to the foes at her gates her answer to their summons, and she hurled at the feet of the Kings who threatened her the gage of battle, *and that gage was the head of a King.*¹

The appendix of the declaration of Pilnitz is the guillotine of the Place de Grève.

The National Assembly had now done its work, and since August 5th, the new elections were going on. Unfortunately, the Assembly had passed a "self-denying ordinance," rendering every member of their own body ineligible for re-election, thus depriving France of the services of the many noble and thoughtful men who had served her so gloriously. The Constitution was brought up complete and its articles revised; September 3rd it was presented to the King; it received his sanction on September 13th, and on the following day he went down to the Assembly, and once more swore an oath to preserve and to defend it. On September 18th it was solemnly proclaimed in Paris, and on the 30th the Assembly dissolved itself, and its work was closed by the simple words of Thouret: "The Constituent Assembly declares that its mission is finished, and

¹ Danton.

it now ends its sittings." And so it passed away, this National Assembly which gave a Constitution to France, this Assembly which is a milestone in the world's history, and the memory of whose work will last as long as man can revere nobleness and admire genius; the Assembly which found the King a despot, and left him the chief magistrate of a liberated people; which found the nobles feudal tyrants, and left them simple citizens; which found the peasants slaves, and left them men; which found the French a mass of warring classes, and left them a united nation; in a word, which found France in fetters, and left her free.

The new Assembly—known as the Legislative—took its place on the succeeding day, October 1st, 1791. We must glance a moment at its composition for this Assembly is not Royalist, as was its predecessor. At the Right we see the party which is identical with the Left of the Constituent, the strict Constitutionalists who desired liberty, but liberty under a Monarchy. It has lost the speakers who had made it mighty, and now attracts little attention. Indeed, its strongest spirit is outside the Assembly, and is the beautiful daughter of Necker, Madame de Staël, upon whom rest all the hopes of the Constitutional party. "She wrote like Rousseau, and spoke like Mirabeau," says Lamartine, but her talents were unfortunately thrown away in striving to put life into that most hopeless lay-figure, a Constitutional Monarch, a King who

does not reign, a leader who does not guide. The Left is the party at which we must pause, for it is the Republican party, the party of the Gironde. The name has no significance; it chanced only that its leading orators are deputies from the department of the Gironde. But do you ask the inspiring spirit of that band? then you must not seek for it in the Assembly, any more than you sought there the guide of the Constitutionalists; but you must turn your eyes to a small house in Paris, where lives the daughter of a wood-engraver, who, at the age of 26, had married an inspector of manufactories of Rouen, named M. Roland, and who thereafter lived awhile at Lyons, and is now in Paris. Dark-eyed and dark-haired, with strong, pure face, beautiful by its force and by its expression rather than by charm of feature, with clear, keen brain and eloquent tongue, cultured and thoughtful, brave as a Greek warrior, true as steel, passionately Republican, her ardent soul an altar to Liberty, lit with quenchless flame, Madame Roland guided, inspired, breathed her own fire of love for Freedom into every heart around her, shared every council, participated in every danger. At her house the Girondist leaders met four times every week, and at these dinners were laid the plans which the party carried out in the Assembly. Of the leaders Vergniaud, Isnard, and Brissot, were on the whole the most remarkable inside the Assembly for the sway they exercised, though we must not

overlook Condorcet, the philosopher and the champion of women, the John Stuart Mill of his time. Vergniaud was a young lawyer, polished, learned, exquisitely eloquent, careless of self-aggrandisement, but devoted to the success of the Revolution ; he was as an Eolian lyre played on by the wind-breath of Liberty ; "his sentences had all the images and harmony of poesy, and if he had not been the orator of a Democracy he would have been its philosopher and its poet."¹ Isnard was the son of a perfumer, highly-educated, and alight with that love of the ancient Republics which seems to have inspired all the Girondists. "Still very young, his eloquence was as fervid as his blood ; his language was but the fire of his passion, coloured by a southern imagination ; his words poured forth like the rapid bursts of impatience. He was the revolutionary impetus personified. The Assembly followed him breathless, and with him arrived at fury before it attained conviction. His discourses were magnificent odes, which elevated discussion to lyric poetry."² Brissot was not an orator, but he was a journalist and a pamphleteer, whose words were always carefully read ; he was the pen of the Girondists, as Vergniaud and Isnard were their tongue, Condorcet their brain, Madame Roland their heart. There was another party of the Left which must not be overlooked ; it was that of "the

¹ *History of the Girondists*, Lamartine, vol. i, p. 241.

² *Ibid.*, p. 229.

Mountain"—so-called simply because its members sat on some elevated benches at the back—at first making little mark in the Assembly; Couthon, paralysed in his lower limbs; Cambon, the paper-financier; Chabot, erst a friar; Merlin and Bazaire;—these were its most prominent members. These were the Jacobins of the Assembly, whose real strength lay outside the Legislative Body, in the clubs of the Jacobins and Cordeliers, where Robespierre, Collot d'Herbois, Danton, Desmoulins, were the guiding spirits, and Marat penned into words their harshest, and as yet only half-formed, suspicions.

"Three causes of uneasiness," says Lamartine, "agitated men's mind at the moment when the Assembly opened its sittings—the clergy, emigration, and impending war." It dealt first with the emigrants. On October 30th the Comte de Provence (who had quitted France at the time of the King's attempted flight) was bidden choose between returning within two months and losing his claim to govern in case of Regency; on November 9th "the Assembly decided that the French assembled beyond the frontiers were suspected of conspiracy against the country; that if on January 1st, 1792, they were still assembled there, they would be regarded as conspirators, would become punishable with death, and after their condemnation, as contumacious, their revenues would be confiscated to the nation, without prejudice, however, to the rights

of their wives, their children, and their legitimate creditors".¹ For the complete justification of this course, we need only remember the plots of which we have spoken, the affairs of Mantua and of Pilnitz, and imagine the restlessness and the excitement which would pervade any country threatened ever by an army hovering on its borders, only waiting opportunity to strike. On November 29th the question of the priests was settled with equal promptitude and equal justice. The priests, all over the country, were creating and fomenting disturbances. "In some places the disaffected priests openly declaimed against the Constitution; in others secret conspiracies were formed, foreign correspondences were established, and no means were left untried to inflame the minds of the populace. Every engine of superstition was employed, every art of eloquence essayed, to seduce them from their allegiance. Nocturnal meetings were held, and nocturnal processions were conducted by the factious priests. The shrines of the Virgin and of the saints were dressed in mourning, as if to indicate the projected overthrow of all religion. The contest, in fine, arrived at length at such extremity that actual combats took place between the fanatical adherents of the ejected priests and the National Guard. The remote parts of the kingdom were nearly engaged in a religious war, and the sanguinary scenes of St. Bartholomew were on the

¹ *Histoire de la Révolution*, Mignet, vol. 1, p. 217.

point of being renewed."¹ Even Alison allows as much, for, after speaking against the decree imposing the Civil Constitution on the clergy, he says: "The sufferers naturally were indefatigable in their endeavours to rouse the people to support their cause. The bishops and priests exerted all their influence to stimulate the country population; and they succeeded, especially in the western provinces, in producing a most powerful sensation. Circular letters were dispatched to the *curés* of the parishes, and instructions generally transmitted to the people. The constitutional clergy were there represented as irregular and unholy; their performance of the sacraments impious and nugatory; marriage by them as nothing but concubinage; divine vengeance as likely to follow an attendance on their service. Roused by these representations, the rural population in the districts of Calvados, Gévandan, and La Vendée broke into open disturbances."² At Avignon, on Sunday, October 16th, an unfortunate officer, named Lescuyer, was seized and dragged into a church by infuriate Papists; on the steps of the altar he fell under countless blows, but did not die. They cut off his nose and lips, pierced his tongue, broke his teeth, and the women cut wider open his gaping wounds with their scissors; at last his friends arrive, and then comes the retaliation. His mangled, but

¹ *Impartial History of the Late Revolution*, vol. i, pp. 474, 475.

² *History of Europe*, Alison, vol. ii, p. 21.

still breathing, body is carried through the streets on a litter, and a mad tumult of blind horror and rage begins; they rush to revenge him, and they massacre the priests and other prisoners in the city gaol, and fling them into a kind of well—called the *glacière*—and then troops are sent down by the Assembly, and the ringleaders are seized, in their turn.¹ The whole story is almost too horrible to relate, except that it is necessary to see what caused the Assembly to interfere with a decree against the priests who originated such scenes—we may say, in passing, that the worst annals of mob-rioting in Paris have no horror approaching the torture of Lescuyer—and worked up their flocks into frenzy; and on November 29th a decree was passed that priests who would not take the oath should be deprived of their pensions, and should be under surveillance, and that if disturbances arose in their communes, and they were proved guilty of inciting to them, they should be banished the realm, and forbidden to return under pain of death. I challenge anyone to say that the decree was an unfair one, and one which was unnecessary to the very existence of the State. Neither of these decrees, however, would the King accept, vital as they were; his veto met them both; he would sign the decree to deprive the Comte de Provence of his rights concerning the Regency if he would not return, but there his concessions ended; in very deed, he hoped

¹ *Histoire de la Révolution*, Louis Blanc, pp. 48-51.

much both from emigrants and priests, and would by no means tie the hands of his best friends. At this critical moment the strength of the Girondist party was still further increased by the election on November 14th of M. Pétion as Mayor of Paris, in the room of Bailly, whose Constitutional-Monarchy ideas had made him utterly unpopular, an unpopularity which had grown into abhorrence since the fatal 17th of July, when his red flag had symbolled the bloodshed on the Champ de Mars. Danton also found his place in the Municipality, and Republicanism was forcing itself to the front.

Meanwhile, the ministers did nothing, and the Girondists determined to strike at them, and no longer to permit them to keep France inactive until the Kings of Europe had finished sharpening their swords; the King also must make his choice between France and the emigrants, and must either defend France, or make way for those who would. Isnard springs into the tribune: " Let us speak to the ministers, to the King, to Europe, with dignified firmness. Let us say to the ministers that hitherto the nation is not satisfied with their conduct; that, henceforward, they have only to choose between public gratitude and the vengeance of the laws, and that by the word responsibility we mean death. Let us say to the King that it is his interest to defend the Constitution; that he only reigns by the people, and for the people; that the nation is his Sovereign, and that he is subject to the law. Let us say to

Europe that the French people, if it draws the sword, will throw away the scabbard ; that it will never again seek it until crowned with the laurels of victory ; that if the cabinets enlist kings in a war against peoples, we will enlist peoples in a war to the death against kings . . . Let us say to Europe that the wars in which nations engage by orders of their despots are only as the blows struck at each other, in the darkness, by two friends, excited by a treacherous instigator. When daylight comes they throw down their weapons to embrace each other, and together they chastise the deceiver. Thus also, if while the foreign armies combat ours, the day of knowledge shall dawn upon them, the nations shall embrace each other before the faces of the dethroned tyrants, before the comforted world and beneath the smiling sky." An address was voted to the King on November 29th, breathing the very spirit of these words. After speaking of the hostile preparations and the menaces of invasion which were destroying all hope of the recovery of France, it goes on : " It is yours, Sire, to stop all this ; it is yours to speak to the foreign powers as befits the King of the French. Tell them that wherever preparations are being made against France, there France can only see her foes ; that we will religiously observe our oath of making no conquests ; that we offer them the safe neighbourhood and the inviolable friendship of a free and powerful people ; that we will respect their laws,

their customs, their institutions, but that we demand the same respect for our own. And tell them that, if the Princes of Germany continue to favour preparations directed against the French, the French will carry among them, not fire and sword, but Liberty. It is for them to calculate what may be the results to them of such a wakening of the nations."¹ A few days after receiving this, Louis came down to the Assembly to announce that he would summon the emigrants to disperse, would write to the Emperor, and if these peaceful efforts failed, he should propose a declaration of war.

Active preparations were now commenced. M. de Narbonne was made Minister of War, at the inspiration of Madame de Staël; 150,000 men were put under arms, and three armies were formed under the command respectively of Rochambeau, Luckner, and Lafayette, and these troops lay near the frontiers, to repel the menaced invasions. The year 1792 opened with the clash of arms, as France slowly arose to defend her threatened homes. But the ministry remained inert, all, saving Narbonne, being utterly disloyal to the nation, loyal only to the King who was willing to win back his authority with foreign steel, and who would stoop to take his crown again from foreign hands. Narbonne was dismissed; and then the Girondins, who deemed him worthy, answered with swift menaces against the ministry, with accusations and impeachment.

¹ *Histoire de la Révolution*, Mignet, vol. i, pp. 222—224.

and the King gave way and sacrificed his ministers, and called the Girondins to his councils. Roland was made Minister of the Interior, Dumourier Minister of Foreign Affairs—Dumourier, who had won his spurs already fighting for liberty abroad, and who was to be one of the generals of the Republic.

Thicker and thicker rolled up around France the thunderclouds of war; Austria was almost ready, the emigrants at Coblenz gathered larger forces. To efforts for peace Austria answered, through the Prince de Kaunitz, that she would suspend preparations only on condition that the French Monarchy should be re-established on the Royal proposals of June 23rd, 1789; that the clergy should receive back all their ancient possessions; that Alsace should be restored to Germany, Avignon and the comtat Venaissin to the Pope.¹ Such was Austria's proposition, and Austria spoke for Europe. Such were the terms offered to France, and to accept such terms was degradation, was national death. France, insulted, sprang to her feet, and declared war (June 20th, 1792). Thus began the long struggle of one nation against Europe in arms, the struggle which slew Liberty, which made Napoleon the tyrant of France. Thus was dug the grave of the yet unborn Republic, for now France breathed in the first inspiration of the war-spirit which ruined her. Not hers, not hers, the blame,

¹ *Histoire de la Révolution*, Mignet, vol. i, p. 232.

for she warred but in self-defence, as the householder might strike at the burglars who threatened his home. To save herself she drew the sword, and the bounding pulse of Liberty made her arms so mighty that every blow she struck was struck with giant-strength, and she bore down all opposition, and her name rang through Europe as that of the soldier who bore the badge of freedom in her helm ; and so she became drunk with the battle-wine of combat, and flushed with the madness of victory and of triumph, and she forgot Freedom to worship the War-god, and fell at last dizzy and bleeding under the iron-heel of the general who had covered her with laurels, and who thereby became her master.

But still the priests plotted, and Louis clung to his veto on the decree respecting them, and the danger grew and grew. Servan, the War Minister, suggested a camp of 20,000 men round Paris, to guard the city, for the troops on the frontier were checked in every direction, and Paris itself might soon be menaced by the threatening foes ; but the King is unwilling, and no progress is being made. At last Madame Roland writes a letter on June 12th, which Roland reads in his own name at the Cabinet Council—a frank, outspoken letter, blunt and to the point : “ Sire, things cannot remain in their present state ; it is a state of crisis, and we must be extricated from it at whatever risk You enjoyed supreme power, and could not have

laid it down without regret. The enemies of the Revolution took into calculation the sentiments they presume you entertain. Your secret favour is their strength. Ought you now to ally yourself to the enemies or the friends of the Constitution? Pronounce once for all . . . The rage of the nation will be terrible if it lose confidence in you. But this confidence is not to be acquired by words, but by acts. Give unquestionable proofs of your sincerity. For instance, two important decrees have been passed, both deeply important for the security of the State, and the delay of your sanction excites distrust. Be on your guard; distrust is not very wide from hatred, and hatred does not hesitate at crime. If you do not give satisfaction to the Revolution, it will be cemented by blood. Deposed priests are agitating the provinces; ratify the measures requisite to put down their fanaticism. Paris is uneasy as to its security; sanction the measures which summon a camp of citizens beneath its walls. Still more delays, and you will be considered as a conspirator and an accomplice." ¹ But Louis, so ready to surround Paris in '89 with foreign bayonets to menace, would not call French soldiers around it to defend. Rather than thus guard Paris, Louis tries a bold stroke: the very next morning he dismisses Roland, Servan, and Clavière.

The step was fatal; no good was done by the King sanctioning the camp a day or two later, for

¹ *History of the Girondists*, Lamartine, vol. i, pp. 424, 425.

the Girondists now took the matter into their own hands. A young man, named Barbaroux, had lately come to Paris from the Gironde, and had joined the party of his native department; he was brave, passionate, devoted to Liberty, and with him consulted Roland and his ardent wife. "Liberty is gone," says Roland, "if we do not speedily disconcert the plots of the court . . . in six weeks the Austrians will be at Paris." "What can be done then to save France? Quick! put pen to paper, young Barbaroux, and ask for 600 Marseillais, 600 men "who know how to die". The 14th of July is near, and many deputations will come from every side to the anniversary on the Champ de Mars, and these will pass unnoted as the others. And meanwhile, awaiting them, we will try the effect of a deputation—a somewhat large one—of the people to the Tuileries, to demand that the King withdraw the veto without more ado. Such deputation is organised without delay, each section sending its representatives; and on the morning of June 20th they gather from all sides, and the procession swells and swells, and marches steadily onward to the Hall of the Assembly, bearing in its front a brass plate, on which is engraven the oath of the *Jeu de Paume*, taken three years before, and a poplar tree to plant—a tree of Liberty—in the garden of the Tuileries. Other symbols also, less dignified, even brutal—for instance, some butchers,

¹ *History of the Girondists*, Lamartine, vol. i, p. 467.

headed by one Legendre, a butcher, carry on their pike-points some bullocks' hearts, with the legend, "the heart of an aristocrat," which symbol, however, is after a while put aside. Santerre, a brewer, is also there, of much weight as a good patriot, and generous employer of labour, having dispensed £12,000 of bread during the time of scarcity, and one who had distinguished himself highly during the attack on the Bastille. Tricolour flags float everywhere, and tricolour ribbons decorate the pikes, and on many a head is seen the *bonnet rouge*, the red Phrygian cap, which is becoming the badge of the hottest Jacobins. Thus they defile through the streets, quiet and peaceable enough, though there mingle with them some of the dangerous element—the rough, brutal, beggar-class, ragged and unkempt, ready for mischief of any kind. Arrived at the Hall of the Assembly, they ask permission to pass through it, and to present their petition that the Assembly shall investigate the causes of the present state of affairs; Guadet, one of the Gironde deputies, speaks in the same strain, remarking that the same complaints are re-echoed from every part of France, and Vergniaud claims that the people be allowed to defile through the hall, as they desire. Permission is given, and the procession passes in, and so has it swelled on its way that it takes three hours in its passage, and from the hall the people bend their steps to the palace gates, and gather and gather, till some 40,000

are waiting around the Tuileries. "We must see the King," is the decision of Santerre, and they press closer round the barred gate. A cannon ball will open it, if need be, since requests are unavailing; but two of the Municipality are here, and bid the National Guards within open in the name of the law, and they obey. The crowd press in, swift and turbulent, and press in towards the Royal apartments; the door is locked, and axes and pikes rattling against it bear a message to those within not unintelligible. As it shivers, it is suddenly thrown open, and the King is there. There is silence for a moment, broken by his question, quietly spoken, as to what they want; and then confused shouts of "The sanction of the decrees," "No veto". As the crowd filled the room, pressed on by those behind, the King was drawn back by his guards into a large bay window, and there he stood, as the people surged round him, crying for the withdrawal of the veto. Let us do justice to Louis. At this crisis his demeanour was admirable; quiet, calm, untroubled, he faced the turbulent throng, answering to their demands: "This is not the place nor the way to obtain what you want," and, as quietly, putting on the red hat handed to him by one in the crowd. Meanwhile, as they passed from the King's apartment, they defiled through that of the Queen, where she stood with her two children beside her, and a few friends around her. Santerre came in, bidding her have no fear, since the crowd meant no

harm, and seeing the child-Dauphin half-stifled under a large red cap that the Queen, in her wish to propitiate, had placed upon his head, he said shortly : "Take it off; you are stifling the child," and promptly turned out of the room three or four ruffians, male and female, who were insulting her. Vergniaud and Isnard, fearful lest the baser element in the crowd should obtain the upper hand, pressed through the throng, exhorting the people to quietude; and gradually, with the aid of Pétion, cleared the Tuileries, until, by eight o'clock in the evening, all was again quiet. No injury had been intended to the Royal family, and no injury was done. The popular feeling had been shown, and a warning had been given to the King, which, were he wise, he would by no means despise. But Louis takes no warning, but goes his way, with many a glance over the frontiers, and new schemes of flight, and sends confidential letters to the foes by careful hands, and a special envoy to treat with them; and the King of Prussia, going to Frankfort to meet the Emperor, is welcomed by illuminations which are formed into letters of flame. "Long live William, the exterminator of the French, and the restorer of Royalty." And to this King, the enemy of France, Louise of France wrote as a friend and an ally, whose objects were identical with his own!

On June 28th Lafayette came to Paris, and, at the bar of the Assembly, he spoke vehemently against the Jacobin Club, and demanded that the

instigators of the "crimes of June 20th" should be punished: but Lafayette had lost his power, and when he called the National Guards out, only 100 responded to the summons, and trying again, only 30 appeared, and he went back to his army discomfited, and the roof of the Jacobin Club rang with denunciations of his treachery, and Lafayette passes away from our sight, the Revolution having grown too mighty for him. And now Pétion is suspended by the court-party forasmuch as he was found wanting on the 20th of June; and sullen resentment growls ominously, for Pétion wields much power and is trusted by the people, and the Girondists in the Assembly feel insulted in his disgrace, and determine to answer back blow for blow, and to strike at the very heart of the anti-revolutionary party by attacking the Throne itself. France was threatened on every side, and there was little time for deliberation: would it not be well to proclaim that the country was in danger, and to call every citizen to the defence of the Fatherland? Vergniaud strikes the note of alarm: it was in the name of the King that the emigrants were assembled, and by the Constitution it was declared that if a King did not formally oppose such an enterprise carried on in his name, he should be dethroned. Suppose that Louis "should set himself against the measures necessary to defend the country, should we not then," said he, "have a right to say to him: 'O King! who have thought, like the tyrant

Lysander, that truth is no more worth than falsehood, and that men may be amused with oaths, as children with toys: who have only feigned love to the laws in order to have power to defy them, to the Constitution lest it should precipitate you from the Throne, whereon you desired to remain in order to destroy it, do you imagine that you can deceive us by hypocritical protestations? . . . No! no! man whom the generosity of the French cannot touch, whom the craving for despotism alone can rule, you are no longer anything to this Constitution which you have so shamelessly violated, to this people whom you have so shamelessly betrayed." Thus Vergniaud pointed to what *might* be spoken were Louis a traitor, and the people who were convinced of the treachery were not long in applying the words to the right quarter. In a few days Brissot spoke out yet more plainly: "The Fatherland is in danger, not because we need troops, not because the troops lack bravery, nor because our frontiers are defenceless, nor because our resources are small. No. It is in danger because its forces are paralysed. And who has thus paralysed them? A single man, he whom the Constitution has made our head, and whom perfidious counsellors have made our enemy. They tell you to fear the Kings of Hungary and of Prussia—and I, I say that the principal strength of these Kings lies in the court, and that it is there that we must first conquer them. They tell you to strike at the refractory

priests throughout the realm—and I, I say that to strike at the court of the Tuileries is to destroy these priests at a single blow. They tell you to pursue all intriguers, all factious people, all conspirators—and I, I say that they will all disappear if you strike the cabinet at the Tuileries ; for this cabinet is the point to which go all the threads, where all the plots are contrived, whence start all the movements. The nation is the play-thing of the cabinet. There is the secret of our position, there the source of the dangers, and there must the remedy be applied."¹ To put the finishing touch to the excitement came the solemn cry : "The Fatherland is in danger," from the lips of the Assembly itself, on July 5th, on the very day, by a strange coincidence, that those Marseillais start from the Town Hall some 1,200 strong, armed with pike, and musket, and sabre, and bringing with them two cannon in case of need ; and they come tramping on steadily, right through the heart of France, dark-eyed, ardent, passionate men, marching to win Freedom, and for Freedom knowing how to die : and hark to the song ringing from their lips, now first heard, the very hymn of Freedom, with the fire of Liberty in it, and the tramp of armed men, Rouget de Lisle's mighty song :

Aux armes ! citoyens !
 Formez vos bataillons !
 Marchons ! marchons !
 Qu'un sang impur
 Abreuve nos sillons !

¹ *Histoire de la Révolution*, Mignet, vol. 1, pp. 261—284.

But not yet are they in Paris, only all is getting ready for them there, for the Marseillais are marching to strike down the tyrant, and the Girondists prepare for them the hearts of the people. July 14th is here, and a poor sort of spectacle is seen at the Champ de Mars, a kind of ghost of the great anniversary, where the King and Queen are hailed with shouts of "Pétion or death"! and the King wears a pistol-proof cuirass beneath his coat, and all is ominous threatening, so different to that July day on which the King swore faith to the Constitution—so different, because that King has perjured himself, because he is false to his plighted word, and has betrayed the people's trust; and now the people's love has turned to hate, and faith deceived has turned to sharp suspicion; and now the nation has arisen to save itself, and to crush the King whose Royalty upheld means France destroyed; and ever nearer and nearer comes the marching song:

Marchons ! marchons
Qu'un sang impur
Abreuve nos sillons !

The excitement grows and grows, and here on Sunday, July 22nd, comes the public promulgation of the decree: "The Fatherland is in danger!" Think what it must have been in that fever-time. The solemn cannon voice pealing forth at regular intervals; the Mayor—reinstated—with all the Municipality, with guards, and solemn state, with

roll of drum, and blare of trumpets, with flags bearing the inscription: "Citizens, the Fatherland is in danger!"; and from point to point they go, and proclaim the solemn warning, planting a flag on the Pont Neuf, and a second on the Hôtel de Ville, and then in every section is raised a tent where sits, all day long, a Municipal officer, to enrol citizens for the defence of the Fatherland, and the troops of citizen soldiers pass out from Paris, to the camp at Soissons, there to learn how to die for France in battle against her foes. And in the midst of all this fever, and all this patriotism, stands a King who is known as a traitor; a King who is in league with the foe. And ever nearer sounds the battle song of the Marseillais.

Is more needed to fire the mine? at least, something more is done, for on July 28th is published a manifesto of the Duke of Brunswick, and the army of Coblenz breaks up its camp, and marches to invade. And this Duke comes with a threat on his lips and words of command on his tongue. He summons the National Guards and the various authorities to return to their old obedience; he says that if the inhabitants of any city dare to defend themselves they shall be punished as rebels, and their town shall be burnt; that if the King be not at once set free, the coalition of the Princes would deliver up to martial judgment, without hope of pardon, every member of the National Assembly, of the department, district, and municipal councils,

and of the National Guard; that if the palace were attacked, the Princes would inflict an ever-memorable vengeance, and destroy Paris itself.¹ And this to Paris? this to a free people? these commands from a foreigner? these threats from an invader? Like a wounded lion France bounds up, mad with indignation, furious with outraged honour. Paris, proud Paris, rings from end to end with one cry of defiance; it is July 30th, AND THE MARSEILLAIS ARE HERE!

They are here, the dark-browed, stern-lipped men, and on the very day of their coming some slight *fracas* occurs between them and some half-tipsy Royalists; and they chase the Royalists through the streets, striking, however, mostly with the flat of the sabre; and only one man, who draws pistol on them, is killed. But they have come for work, and are ready to strike at signal given; and on August 3rd Mayor Pétion goes to the Legislative Body, and demands the deposition of the King in the name of the sections of Paris. The petition is referred to a special committee. But there is to be no more waiting, no more dallying with this vital point. The moment has come for insurrection, and the day is fixed, August 10th; the tocsin will ring out, and at the signal all citizens loyal to the nation shall betake themselves to their own rallying point, and put themselves under orders. A revolutionary committee is appointed to wield supreme

¹ *Histoire de la Révolution*, Mignet, vol. i., pp. 258, 259.

authority, and Pétion is to be guarded, so that no blame may be cast upon him, and he may run no risk in case of failure. At the Tuileries the danger was recognised, and all was prepared for a vigorous defence. There were between eight and nine hundred Swiss Guards, and a number of armed gentlemen, the very "Knights of the Dagger" we have met before, and who were bound to repair to the Tuileries when danger threatened the King. At midnight the tocsin rang out, and at once the sections rose, the provisional committee took their places at the Hôtel de Ville, and many members of the Assembly gathered in their own hall, under the presidency of Vergniaud. Pétion was at the palace, and, fearing for his safety, the Assembly summoned him to its bar, and a deputation from the Hôtel de Ville arriving, he went away with them, and was put under arrest as had been agreed. Mandat, the commander of the palace guards, was then summoned, deprived of his command, which was transferred to Santerre, and, on his way out, was massacred. Meanwhile, at the castle, the National Guards and the other defenders were jarring, and Louis, reviewing them at five o'clock in the morning, was met with shouts of *Vive le Roi* from some, *Vive la Nation* from others, and many shouted *Vive Pétion*. As he passed cries were heard of "Down with the veto, down with the traitor," and on his return to the palace many battalions turn the cannons' mouths towards the Tuileries. And

now come the Marseillais, as vanguard of the attacking army, and rapidly roll up the various columns, and a number of the artillery-men of the palace, reminded of their duty, uncharge their cannons. It is rapidly decided that the Royal Family shall take shelter in the Assembly, and they leave the palace, cross the gardens, traverse the terrace with difficulty through a menacing crowd ; but the children are with them, and no blows are struck ; they enter the Hall in safety. But the King has fled and has left no orders to capitulate, and the Swiss are in charge and will not surrender the palace given into their care. Nay, they will defend their trust, and sharp rattle of musketry breaks from the palace windows and the dead fall thick. Not to be slaughtered like sheep have the Marseillais crossed France, and forward they charge, and attack the palace, gallantly defended by the Swiss. Hard is the struggle, and for an hour it goes on, and still the Swiss guards maintain their ground, their weakness of numbers made up by the cover under which they fight. But now a fatal order comes from the King : " Cease firing " : and, faithful to the death, the Swiss obey, the gallant, loyal hearts, loyal to the wretched King whom they had sworn to obey ; and they cease firing in the very midst of the frantic struggle, and the assailants rush on, and they fall defenceless at their posts. Honour to the brave and true who could die and keep their faith, to these eight hundred Swiss of

whom only 200 survived. Of the people 1,200 lay dead, their double loss being due to the fact that they mostly fought wholly exposed to the murderous fire of the Swiss, and in their dense mass every shot told with terrible effect. The 200 Guards who had escaped were housed and protected by the very people who had attacked the palace, and, the fierce struggle over, there were no excesses; even as the victorious assailants raged through the palace a valuable case of jewels packed up by one of them was not stolen, but was secured and taken to the President of the Assembly. It was a fierce battle and a bloody one, as all battles must be where there are brave men on either side, and the Marseillais and the Parisians proved that they, as well as the Swiss, "knew how to die". When the night fell on Paris all was quiet, but all the houses were lighted up to assist in preserving order. The King and his family had passed the whole day in the Hall of the Assembly, in the reporters' box behind the President's chair; and while the bullets fell thick as hail outside, and men were breathing out their lives in the battle, the Assembly passed nine decrees, of which the principal ones convoked a National Convention to decide on the fate of Louis, and provisionally suspended the King from exercising any executive power.¹

¹ *Sketch of the French Revolution*, S. Perry, vol. ii, pp. 209, 210, Ed. 1796.

Thus finally fell the ancient Monarchy of France (August 10th, 1792); fell under the blows of a risen people, who knew that the only hope of guarding the Fatherland lay in striking down the Royal traitor who was secretly treating with her foes, and whose allies were marching to destroy her. The proud head of France was to be bowed in the dust before the Kings of Europe, if France could not save herself; but not thus can a whole nation be trampled down, and the King fell in order that the Nation might exist. The Crown was shivered; the Throne was overturned: and with the hymn of her Marseillais heralding her approach, with the light of battle in her eyes, and a bared sword in her mighty grasp, comes the Republic which shall save the Fatherland, the glorious Republic of '92.

LECTURE VI

TO THE DEATH OF THE KING

YES! France is arisen France Republican, and the Monarchy is fallen, and he that was King of France finds his realm shrunken into the ten feet square of a reporter's box. In that box the King and the Royal Family are glad to shelter, and there they remain through the long hot hours of the August day, and the long hot hours of the August night, until at length, at two o'clock in the morning, they are conducted to some small chambers over the committee rooms of the Assembly; there they sleep, the discrowned King and Queen, and the child who was born to inherit a diadem and found himself only heir to a prison, the poor golden-haired child on whose guiltless head descended the long-gathering avalanche of a people's vengeance. The following day, Saturday, August 11th, was also passed in the same box, from which the King and Queen heard passed the decrees which rang the passing bell of the Monarchy; the palace of the Luxembourg was first selected for their residence, then the house of the Minister of Justice, but

finally, on the request of the Municipality, the Temple was appointed for their home; for on the Sunday, the Recorder M. Manuel, and other municipal officers, came with an address to the Legislative Body: "Legislators, France is free, because the King is at length subject to the law. It was reserved for you to hold out to all nations this great example. The only right which yet remains to Louis XVI is that of making his defence before his sovereign—the people; and it is that right alone which places him under the safeguard of the nation. The Temple can serve for the residence of the King and his family. He shall be guarded by twenty men from each of the 48 sections. If you will trust the people with the King, his wife, and their sister, they shall be conducted to-morrow with all the respect that is due to misfortune. But they must not be suffered to carry on any correspondence, for they have none but traitors for their friends . . . " ¹ The Assembly decided to commit, asking for the custody of the King and the Royal Family; and at three o'clock on the following day, Monday, August 18th, Pétion—freed from his nominal arrest—and Manuel brought two carriages to the Hall of the Assembly, to convey the prisoners to the Temple; slowly they rolled along, between the thick-pressed ranks of the people who had conquered them, through gleaming pikes and bayonets, amid scowling

¹ *Sketch of the French Revolution*, S. Perry, vol. ii, pp. 212, 213.

faces surmounted by the red cap of liberty, past the fragments of Royal statues, broken on August 11th, emblems of the shivered Monarchy; past all these they went for a long two hours of pain and of degradation, traversing Paris together for the last time; and at length the gates of the Temple clanged sullenly behind them, to open again only on the way to trial and to death. A sad, rough home for these two who had been Sovereigns, and who had known the luxury of Versailles and of St. Cloud, and a home where the long hours dragged wearily, heavily. Here, for a while, we bid them farewell, for the work of the autumn is to be done without their aid; only through their prison bars can they hear faintly the shrieks of the September massacres, which they and their friends had caused; the fierce turmoil as France battled for her life against the foes whom they had summoned, and the shout of victory which rent the skies when the Republic had saved the France which the Monarchy had well-nigh slain.

. A new ministry was appointed by the Assembly on the night of August 10th; Roland, Servan, and Clavière were reinstated in their former positions, Monge and Le Brun were joined with them, and Danton was made Minister of Justice. For the hour of Danton had come to him, as their hour comes to all great men; and Danton was great both in his virtues and his vices; like Mirabeau his face was smallpox-scarred, and he was at once ugly and

attractive, his eyes flashing, his mouth harsh, capable, at once of furious passion and of gentlest tenderness, un pitying to the foes of France, but full of forgiveness for his own, coarse and sensual at times, but lovingly respectful to his wife whom he adored. Danton was Minister of Justice, and was really head of the ministry, for all bowed before him, and none ventured to oppose.

The next care of the Assembly was to see to the armies on the frontiers, and as Lafayette had been haranguing his soldiers in favour of the King, and was threatening to march on Paris, he was promptly dismissed, and Dumourier was made commander-in-chief. Lafayette fled over the frontier, fell into the hands of the Austrians, was imprisoned, and so passes from the Revolution-story: of Dumourier we shall shortly hear enough. But the enemy on her borders was not the only foe of France, for there was a second great danger that threatened her, namely, the traitors at home; and having, on August 16th, dismissed Lafayette, on August 17th, the Assembly decreed the formation of a criminal tribunal, to be composed of one commissioner from each section of Paris: on August 19th, this tribunal was solemnly inaugurated, and at once began its work of trying those accused of treason and conspiracy; on August 21st the first head fell under the axe of the guillotine. Robespierre was named as presiding judge. but he refused the office, for a reason which did him

honour, and which he thus explained in a letter to the *Moniteur* of August 28th: "From the beginning of the Revolution I have combated the greater portion of these criminals of high treason to the nation; I have denounced the greater part of them; I have predicted all their attempts, even when the people believed in their patriotism. I could not be the judge of those of whom I had been the adversary; and I was forced to recollect that if they had been the enemies of my country, they had also declared themselves the enemies of my person."¹ But the real power which now ruled Paris was neither the Assembly nor the ministers, but that Revolutionary Committee which, on August 9th, had replaced the regularly constituted Municipality, and was, henceforth, the Municipality of Paris; in this body were Danton, Robespierre, Marat, Collot d'Herbois, Billaud Varennes, and Tallien, together with many other less noted names; in this body a section, again, was the active power, a special "Committee of Public Surveillance," appointed by the Municipality from its own number; Danton and Marat were members of this inner circle, but Robespierre did not belong to it. The Municipality set vigorously to work to provide for the safety of Paris; church bells and bronze images were melted into cannon, church plate into money, iron railings into pikes and, in a few days, 10,000 volunteers were enrolled to march against

¹ *Life of Robespierre*, G. H. Lewes, p. 262.

the invaders of France.' Meanwhile the Assembly arranged the details of the National Convention which was to decide the fate of Louis, and the future Government of France; every Frenchman of full age was to have a vote in the choice of the electors, who, in their turn, were to choose the deputies; the "primary assemblies," or assemblies of electors, were to meet on August 26th, the Convention itself on September 20th. A number of distinguished foreigners were naturalised by decree, and thus became eligible to the Convention; among these were Priestley, Bentham, Paine, Wilberforce, Clarkson, and Washington. There is one other decree passed by this Assembly which deserves notice, namely, the legalisation of divorce. Divorce might be pronounced by a married couple on "the application of either party, alleging simply as a cause, incompatibility of humour or character. The female children were to be entirely confided to the care of the mother, as well as the males to the age of seven years, when the latter were again to be re-committed to the superintendence of the father: provided only, that by mutual agreement any other arrangement might take place with respect to the disposal of the children; or arbitrators might be chosen by the nearest of kin to determine on the subject. The parents were to contribute equally to the maintenance of the children, in proportion to their property,

¹ *Histoire de la Révolution*, Louis Blanc, pp. 179, 180.

whether under the care of the father or mother. Family arbitrators were to be chosen to direct with respect to the partition of the property, or the alimentary pension to be allowed to the party divorced. Neither of the parties could contract a new marriage for the space of one year".¹ This appears to me to be as wise and just a divorce law as could well be framed, and is such a law as is sorely needed among ourselves for the purity and happiness of marriage unions.

We must now turn our eyes to the saddest event of the Revolution—that event which, exaggerated by hastily-adopted rumours, and magnified by Royalist calumnies, has been stained with even a deeper crimson than it deserves; that event which is painted as though it were a causeless outbreak of brute ferocity; that event which is generally referred to the blood-lust of an infuriated populace; that event ~~which~~ is hurled as a taunt at the Revolution, as though it stood alone in the world's history, as though the Church and the Monarchy had not their Inquisition and their massacre of St. Bartholomew—I mean the "massacres of September". I have before said that I do not seek to excuse either brutality or ferocity, but neither do I seek to shut my eyes to the fact that it was the Kings of Europe who sharpened the swords of the *Septembriseurs* of

¹ *Impartial History of the Late Revolution*, vol. ii, pp 179, 180.

Paris ; these massacres were the result of fear, and fear is always cruel ; they were the frantic strokes of despair, crushing the traitors in the rear ere marching to die against the foe in the front. The whole bitter cry bursts from the lips of a man whose sword is dripping blood, in answer to Manuel, who seeks to stay the slaughter. "I! I am not an orator, and I deceive nobody ; and I tell you that I am the father of a family, I have a wife and five children, and I will not leave them behind to be murdered while I go to fight the enemy."¹ Let us trace the growing frenzy which culminated in these September massacres. We have seen the foreign armies marching into France, and the threats which heralded their coming. On August 20th Longwy was besieged, and on August 24th it capitulated ; on the 30th Verdun was attacked, and, if Verdun fell, the invaders would march straight on Paris. A messenger from the army told Roland that the Duke of Brunswick was as certain to be in Paris in a fortnight as a wedge was certain to go into a log if hammered in. Verdun made no defence ; the news of its fall reached Paris on the night of September 1st, and Paris had now only to await the doom pronounced upon it by the Duke ; unless it could save itself, it would speedily be a heap of smoking ruins, strewn with the corpses of its children. And, in face of such a prospect as that, should the Royalists escape to triumph over the

¹ *Histoire de la Révolution*, Louis Blanc, p. 108.

massacre of their foes? should the labour of the Assemblies, the new-won liberty, the blood poured out by their comrades who fell for freedom—should all be lost? should the struggles and the hardy-gained triumphs be in vain? should the insolent nobility return, and reap the fruits of their treachery, and the King be re-instated by foreign steel, and France weep in chains over her slaughtered sons? Such were the thoughts seething in men's hearts, as came blow after blow on that September day. For on that same day came a proclamation from the allied Princes, which said, among other things, that, where necessary, the towns should be destroyed, "because deserts were preferable to rebels". On that same day a placard was issued, signed by the ministers: "You have traitors in your bosom. Ah! without them the struggle would soon be over." On that same day a man condemned to death proclaimed on the scaffold that he would be well avenged, that there was a conspiracy in the prisons, that the prisoners were armed, and would break out and set Paris in flames. And there was one man in Paris who would dare all in order to save France; one man who would stop at nothing to defend the Revolution; one man who would sacrifice everything, even his own fame, rather than that Liberty should die; one man who said later: "I looked the crime straight in the face, and I did it"; that man was Danton. Danton said sternly to the Committee of Public Surveillance: "We must strike

the Royalists with terror " ; and a significant gesture gave point to the words. The prisons were full of Royalists, for on August 28th Danton had asked, and had received, permission to search from house to house both for arms and for traitors, and on the night of the 29th he had arrested and thrown into prison all those who were chiefly suspected of plotting against the Revolution. The traitors were thus in the grasp of Paris, and Paris was in despair ; in a few days the Prussians would be at her gates, and these would arise and paralyse all efforts of defence. September 2nd was a Sunday ; the sections met, and many, if not all, voted for the death of the Royalist prisoners. Through the streets rang an almost simultaneous cry : " To the prisons " ; the Municipality had bidden the people assemble for enrolment at the Champ de Mars at the sound of the tocsin, and all was frenzied excitement ; at the Assembly Roland had just revealed a vast conspiracy in La Vendée, and the Minister of War had unfolded a threatening budget of news just received. As the tocsin rings out, and is answered by boom of cannon, Danton springs to the tribune, and the thunder of his voice seems an echo of the storm without : the people are rising to defend their country, it is for the Assembly to direct the movement ; " the tocsin that you hear does not sound the alarm, it sounds the battle-charge against the foe. To triumph we need only daring, daring, and still daring, and France is saved."

The executions appear to have begun by a sharp attack on the Abbaye by the people of the neighbourhood, provoked beyond endurance by the taunts of the prisoners within ; but this first outburst was rapidly checked by an order from the Committee of Public Surveillance, "to *judge* the prisoners," and a judge and jury were quickly chosen—the judge was Maillard, of the Bastille and of the Revolt of Women—the prison-books recording the names of, and the accusations against, the prisoners were brought out, and before this tribunal each prisoner was led, and rapidly examined. His guilt or his innocence was notified to the executioners outside by a given signal, different at the different prisons ; if guilty he was struck down amid a silence which was only broken from time to time by the cry of *Vive la Nation* ; if innocent, he was welcomed with shouts of joy, and carried home safely in triumph by the very men who would have slain him pitilessly if decreed a traitor. The simple fact of being a Royalist by no means ensured condemnation. "We judge results, not opinions," said Maillard to one who boldly avowed his loyalty to the King, but against whom there was no other accusation, and he set him free. Weber, the foster-brother of the Queen, was brought before the tribunal and questioned, and no direct evidence against him being proffered, he was acquitted, led out safely amid warm congratulations, bidden enrol in the army, *but excused because he was an*

Austrian, and could not rightly fight against his countrymen, and, finally, when the President of his section, knowing his participation in court plots, desired to retain him, the committee at once answered that he had been acquitted, and that was sufficient.¹ In fact, Weber's account of his own personal treatment on that terrible day is thoroughly incompatible with the popular notions of the September massacres, and shows the gross inaccuracy of the story given by Alison, with even more than his usual bitter prejudice and unfairness, and proves that discrimination was exercised by the tribunal, and that even in this agonised moment the people endeavoured to strike down *only* those who were plotting against the national existence. A bright spot of relief in the sad darkness of the scene is the saving of Abbé Sicard, Royalist and priest, because he instructed the deaf and dumb, and his life was, therefore, valuable to humanity. The whole secret of the butchery lies in the fact that these Royalists were traitors, more or less allied with the invaders, and ready to assist them, and in this supreme hour traitors could not be permitted to remain in Paris; so, unable to keep them safely, unable to drive them away, since that would have been to recruit for the enemy, the people slew them in self-defence. The victims numbered 1,089, according to Carlyle; 1,480 according to Louis Blanc. It is held by several writers that the whole of these were slaughtered by

¹ *Memoirs*, Weber, vol. iii., pp. 186—178.

some 200 paid assassins, hired to do the bloody work. Against this theory Louis Blanc vehemently protests, and insists that the whole affair was the simple result of the fear and despair of the people, and that there was no concerted plan. Against the idea that the executioners were villains of the lowest type, working for blood-money, we must put the fact of their joy when a prisoner was declared innocent, which is incompatible with such a theory ; and we must also remark that men who would murder for money would not be over-nice about stealing the valuables of their victims, but we find that jewellery, pocket books, and even handkerchiefs, were carefully given over to the authorities ; the only things taken were the shoes, and before touching these, the formal request for them was made by one on behalf of all : " Our brave brothers are barefooted, and they start to-morrow for the frontiers." ¹ On the other hand, I feel compelled to believe that the massacre was resolved on beforehand, for the method with which the proceedings were conducted implies a plan previously formed and then carried out. The evidence, on the whole, appears to me to prove that these massacres were not a sudden outbreak of ferocity on the part of the people, but that—rendered possible and assisted by the frenzied state of defiance and despair of the Parisians—they were planned and ruthlessly carried out by the iron will of Danton, who could

¹ *Histoire de la Révolution*, Louis Blanc, p. 498.

see no other way than this of saving the work of the Revolution, and who sternly resolved to sacrifice the few in order to save the nation.

While Paris was in this fever-delirium as to secret traitors at home, the French recruits were testing their strength against open enemies in the field. For some time Dumourier, with consummate patience and skill, had been training his raw lads into soldiers; he risked no large engagements, but practised them in small skirmishes here and there, encouraging them with slight successes, teaching them discipline and obedience under fire, until they began to feel confidence both in their leaders and in themselves; under the creative touch of his genius the raw, undisciplined levies, with nothing but enthusiasm to recommend them, were becoming an army; he inspired them to fight for France, and to deem death glorious, if by their death the Fatherland might live. But the enemy is now advancing into the heart of the country, and if Dumourier is to save Paris, he must dare all to stop the invading army. Longwy has fallen; Verdun will soon fall; how shall he meet the veteran troops with these gallant lads of his, half-clothed, half-fed, half-drilled? On August 26th the General starts for Sedan—hereafter to be made infamous by an Empire—to review the troops which Lafayette had erst commanded, and who were rebelliously inclined towards their new chief, and half scolds, half shames, them into gallantry. Then he calls a

council of war. The enemy is at Verdun; his next point of attack is Châlons; between Verdun and Châlons lies a line of forests, marshes, rivers, hills, through which run five roads only; at Châlons is a camp of recruits; that passed, the road to Paris lies open. The council of war decides that the army shall retreat on Châlons, and there try to bar the way. Dumourier says nothing against the plan, but his mind is made up. The council over, he beckons to him Adjutant-General Thouvenot, whose face pleases his keen eye, and points him to the still out-stretched map; retreat is dangerous, because it will discourage the troops just when boldest valour is most sorely needed; there is no point at which these young soldiers can hope to check the German advance, if the Germans are permitted to march on Châlons; but see that broad belt of forest land—called of Argonne—and of broken ground, and of marshy, treacherous footing; see those roads that may be blocked; see the natural fortress that may be defended. "There," says Dumourier, "are the Thermopylæ of France."¹ Quick as light moves swift Dumourier, for time is everything in such a race for life as this. To each body of troops gallop his messengers, massing them at each point, to hold that point or die; to Paris ride trusty officers to tell Danton and Servan that they will hear of victory or of annihilation; let them raise all France behind him, and he will answer for the foe

¹ *History of the Girondists*, Lamartine, vol. ii, p. 108.

in the front. Two camps he forms, like lightning, for the coming volunteers ; masses food, fodder, all necessaries, for the levies he expects ; then with his 27,000 men Dumourier holds his passes against the 80,000 veterans who advance to the attack. Verdun has fallen without defence, for Colonel Baurepaire, its commander, alone in his dauntless courage, has been bidden sign the shameful capitulation ere one shot has fallen on the town. And he has flung down the pen, and raised a pistol : " I die free," and has fallen dead in the council-chamber rather than surrender to the foe. And now comes the supreme struggle. On September 14th, Dumourier, holding Grand Pré, is attacked, and, owing to the error of a subordinate, has to fall slowly back on St. Ménéhould ; on the 17th General Dillon is attacked at Biesme, and beats back the foe gallantly ; days of struggle ; days of turmoil ; days of hunger ; and even of an attempt at mutiny, which Dumourier will by no means have, but surrounds the troops that threaten revolt with cannon in front and cavalry behind, and speaks hot words of rebuke : " Ye are not citizens, nor soldiers, nor men ; " and the troops fall repentant, praying to be sent on sharpest service to redeem their name.¹ True general of men is this Dumourier of ours. At last Brunswick rounds the Argonne, and strikes towards Châlons, but Dumourier will not leave his vantage-ground, but will fight there and nowhere else, and Brunswick dare not

¹ This incident is by some put a few weeks later.

advance with this stubborn General in his rear ; so Brunswick entrenches himself at La Lune, and the French face him at Valmy, and on this 20th of September a battle is fought. Kellermann—trusted by Dumourier—is there in command, and will test his strength ; in vain the German cannon thunder against that dauntless line ; it wavers not, it falters not ; Kellermann will try a charge, and plunges forward gallantly, but is beaten back, his horse shot under him, but he unhurt. now the Prussians will attack, and with them these long-expected French emigrants, the nobles who had said scornfully that these mob-soldiers would fly before the whirl of their sabres as the barn-door poultry fly at the whip of the farmer ; poultry they may be, O dainty nobleman-soldiers, but, if so, surely of gamecock breed, for there is no thought of flight in those gallant hearts, and no look of fear in those steady young eyes, as ye come in your charge against them, the flower of the German army, and the pick of the chivalry of France ; Kellermann springs from his horse and bids them lead it away, for he will fight as a foot-soldier among his men, and conquer or fall with them. Now, young soldiers of France, show yourselves worthy of the country that bore you ; now stand firm, but fire not ; let them come till they are close upon you, and then charge home with the bayonet ; the supreme moment is come, and Kellermann springs in front of the line, waving his hat on the point of his sword, and a

cry bursts from his lips: "For Fatherland!" like thunder every man shouts in answer: "For Fatherland!" and the hills ring with the cry that means victory or death, and they charge at the coming foe: and now who dare stand the shock of these men who fight for France? now who dare face the storm of their joyous charge and the flashing lightning of their bayonet-points levelled straight at the breasts of the foe? Not these hireling German soldiers; not these jaunty emigrant nobles; the retreat sounds in answer to the shout of the Frenchmen, and the battle of Valmy is inscribed on the banner of the Republic. On the 24th came the news of this formal proclamation of the Republic, which had rung out in Paris while the cannons of Valmy which ensured its safety scarce ceased to re-echo; six days later the whole German army was in full retreat, and Dumourier had redeemed his promise, Paris was safe from the profanation of foreign tread, Republican France had beaten back the Kings of Europe."¹ Dumourier bade his generals follow the retreating army of Prussia, while he went to Paris to consult with Danton, for Dumourier desired more than to defend, he desired to attack, and he had conceived a plan of campaign which should add Belgium to France. And now Brunswick, who had threatened, had become a suppliant; Brunswick,

¹ The best accounts which I have met with of this famous battle are to be found in Lamartine's *History of the Girondists*, the *Impartial History*, and Louis Blanc's *Histoire de la Révolution*.

who had so insulted France, now pleaded humbly with her for mercy on her dethroned King, prayed only that he might have some place given him, if but that of "the principal tax-gatherer of the country"; so low had fallen the haughty enemies of the young Republic. By the end of October no foreign foe trod the soil of France, and solemnly rang out in Paris the joyous proclamation: "The Fatherland is no longer in danger." The cry of July 22nd had saved the country.

But our rough sketch of these glorious months would be indeed imperfect if we said no word of the gallant defence of the towns of Thionville and of Lille. Thionville, commanded by General Wimpfen, held in check throughout the campaign a force of 28,000 Austrians, answering back gallant defiance to all summons of surrender. Lille out-shone all others by its heroism, so quiet, so steadfast, so unyielding; its citizens had promised on September 23rd that they "would be buried under the ruins of the town rather than surrender their post," and on September 29th they answered to the summons of the Austrians: "We have just renewed our oath to be faithful to the nation, and to maintain liberty and equality, or to die at our post. We will not perjure ourselves." On the same day began the cannonade, and for a whole week shells and red-hot cannon-balls fell unceasingly on the poorest part of the town, the Austrians hoping, by this means, to arouse the masses against their leaders. But only

one spirit animated poor and rich, leaders and followers, for were they not all Frenchmen, holding Lille for the Republic of France? So the citizens took the keys of the town, and hung them up solemnly on the tree of liberty in the large square, and swore that the traitor who removed them to unlock the gates to the foe should suffer death as a reward for his cowardice. The women and children made it their duty to watch for the bombs as they fell, and to knock out the burning fuses before they could cause the explosion; a shell crashed into the committee-room—"We are in permanence," coldly said one of the officials; the houses became heaps of ruins—the inhabitants lived in huts and in cellars; upwards of 80,000 red-hot cannon-balls, 6,000 bombs, and a vast number of other missiles, fell in the city during that heroic resistance. Lille triumphed in the end, for the retreat of the allied armies compelled the Austrians to fall back, and the siege was raised on October 8th.¹ Meanwhile Nice and Savoy were conquered by General Montesquieu, and General Custine carried all before him on the Rhine; he charged into Spires in the most unorthodox fashion, actually hewing down the gates with axes, and driving out the Austrians before him. These mad young Republicans disconcerted their trained antagonists by their utter unconcern as to *how* they won, provided only that they *did* win. Their disregard of

¹ *Impartial History of the Revolution*, vol. ii, pp. 157—165.

all the ordinary rules of warfare was most perplexing and unpleasant; what could reasonable troops do against these hot-brained youngsters, who, instead of manœuvring according to recognised laws, went pellmell straight to the point where they wanted to be, reckless of all rules except the rule of victory? The fall of Worms, of Mayence, of Frankfort, followed in swift succession. The last town, however, was not retained, for in the month of December the Prussians suddenly appeared before it, and the inhabitants threw open the gates; the Prussians rushed in, and massacred the whole garrison, consisting of 1,800 men, with the exception of a few who managed to escape, and who were taken prisoners. A sadder fate befell these, for the Royalists cut off their hands, and sent them, thus mutilated, to their comrades at Mayence. I do not find that Alison, who has so much strong detestation to hurl at the massacres of September in Paris, has one word of reprobation to cast at this atrocity, which was perpetrated by Royalty, and not by the hated Democracy; the fact that it *was* committed by Royalty is quite enough to prevent him from speaking against it. While the armies were thus triumphing in Savoy and in Germany, Dumourier perfected his scheme regarding Belgium, and invaded that country, towards the end of October, at the head of about 40,000 men, co-operated with by General Labourdonnaye with 80,000, and General Harville with some 80,000 more. On November 4th

he encountered some slight resistance at the village of Bossu, and on November 5th he came in sight of the main Austrian army, strongly entrenched on the heights of Gemappe, or Jemappes. The Austrians were protected by three lines of redoubts, and the only hope of victory depended upon the desperate courage of the young French troops. If they would dare charge those redoubts with the bayonet—those redoubts rising one above another, armed with 100 cannon—then, and only then, was it possible for France to win. At 12 o'clock, Dumourier determined to attack, and as he rode to the head of the troops he gave a signal to the band, and the "Marseillaise" broke out; the soldiers charged forward, with the storm-chorus from thousands of lips ringing out above the din of battle. The first line of redoubts was carried in that furious assault. This success was rapidly followed by the capture of the second line, and, at about 2 o'clock, the Austrians broke and fled. After this battle Belgium was rapidly overrun, and the division under Labourdonnaye took Malins, Ghent, and Antwerp. Such were the marvellous successes that crowned the Republican arms in every direction, and these successes were won by undrilled town lads and peasants, often—as in Belgium—without shoes, coats, or cloaks. We must not omit to record, to the honour of these suffering soldiers, that they remembered that they were the soldiers of a Republic, and that the honour of France was in their

hands. "They abstained religiously from plunder, and, as they endured the want of every necessary with fortitude, were cautious of injuring the rights of others." ¹

In July France had a King; she was surrounded by Europe in arms; she appeared to be helpless, an easy prey to her foes; but France struck down the King, and trusted everything to the people; France proclaimed a Republic, and summoned all her children to defend it: and her sons rushed forward at her cry, and engraved the Republican motto on their hearts, and struck for Liberty and for Equality, and found that the arm of the peasant in the battle-field was worth as much as that of the long-descended noble, and they conquered wherever they went, and carried Freedom to those whom they attacked. In December France was safe, France was triumphant, France was strong; the army of the emigrants was scattered; the hired troops of Germany were driven back; the Republic was powerful and dreaded. For the first time Europe learnt what one nation could do who had tasted of the wine of freedom; for the first time Europe felt what was the resistless strength of a people, when the heart of every man and woman in it pulsed with the blood of liberty, and each was determined rather to die free than to live enslaved.

But we must leave the army and return to Paris, which we quitted after the massacres of September.

¹ *Impartial History*, vol. ii, p. 159.

The elections for the National Convention went rapidly forward, and were all completed and verified by September 20th. On September 21st the Legislative Assembly conducted its successor to the *Salle du Manège*, and formally resigned the powers with which it had hitherto been invested. This Convention was divided into three distinct bodies : the Girondins, sitting on the Right ; the Jacobins, or Mountain, on the Left, and the Plain between them, consisting of deputies who had not yet coalesced with either side. The Girondins were in the majority, as most of the members returned by the departments were Republicans of a reasonable and noble type, men who desired a Republic, but a Republic of law, of culture, of thought, a true Republic, liberal, tolerant, pure, whose hands should be strong and merciful, whose feet should not be stained with blood ; among the Girondins sat Vergniaud, Louvet, Isnard, Barbaroux, Pétion, Condorcet, Siéyès, Paine, Brissot, Grégoire, leaders of whom any party might well be proud ; the Mountain was composed principally of the deputies of Paris, supported by some other members sent to the Convention by towns in which the Jacobin influence was powerful : Robespierre, Danton, Marat, Desmoulins, Tallien, Cloutz, David, Collot d'Herbois, Legendre, Billaud-Varennes, Philippe Egalité (at one time Duc d'Orléans), Couthon, St. Just, all sat among that never-to-be-forgotten band, the band which destroyed the Revolution. These men were the representatives

of the sufferings of the past, rather than of the needs of the present; they were the embodied wrongs of France, the outgrowth of the long tyranny of the Monarch and the noble; Robespierre and Danton alone were aught more than this: they should have belonged to the Gironde, and not to the Mountain: the rest were the scourge which despotism had plaited, the sword which long agony had forged; they came to strike down the tyrants, not to build up liberty; they came to trample down the torturers of the people, not to mould the people into citizens; they came as avengers to slay, not as legislators to teach and to direct. From the very first a bitter antagonism was manifest between the Mountain and the Girondins, an antagonism which grew sharper and keener, and which—dissembled for a while during the trial of Louis—broke out with fresh vigour after his death, and only ended with the destruction of the Gironde.

The first act of the Convention was to proclaim the Republic, and this was done by acclamation, Royalty being "for ever abolished in France:" it was decreed also that all public Acts should be dated from the First Year of the French Republic. Pétion was elected as President; Brissot, Condorcet, Lasource, Rabaut St. Etienne, Vergniaud, Camus, as Secretaries; thus the triumph of the Gironde appeared complete, and all promised well. On the evening of that day (September 21st) the principal Girondins met at the house of Madame

Roland to rejoice over the fruition of their fairest hopes: "Madame Roland, pale with emotion, shot forth glances of supernatural brilliancy, as though through all the glory and felicity of this day she discerned the scaffold. The aged Roland gazed on his wife, and seemed to ask her if this day were not the culminating point of their lives, after which nought remained but to die . . . Vergniaud, on whom the eyes of all were fixed, as the principal author and the only moderator of the future Republic, displayed in his attitude and his features the careless repose of strength previous to and after the combat; he gazed on his friends with a serene yet melancholy smile, and conversed but little. At the end of the supper he filled his glass, rose, and proposed to drink to the eternity of the Republic. Madame Roland, full of the souvenirs of antiquity, asked Vergniaud to scatter in his glass, after the custom of the ancients, some roses from her bouquet. Vergniaud held out his glass, and scattered the leaves on the wine, and drank; then, turning to Barbaroux: 'Barbaroux,' said he in a low voice, 'it is not roses, but cypress leaves, we should quaff in our wine to-night. In drinking to a Republic, stained at its birth with the blood of September, who knows that we do not drink to our own death? No matter,' added he, 'were this wine my blood, I would drain it to liberty and equality.' " "Vive la République!" cried all the guests."

¹ *History of the Girondists*, Lamartine vol. ii. pp. 186, 186.

The struggle began between the Girondins and the Jacobins; the orators of the Gironde attacked the leaders of the more turbulent faction, and denounced them in the Assembly; they accused Danton, Robespierre, and Marat, of forming a triumvirate who desired to tyrannise by threat and by blood, and at last accused Robespierre of aspiring to the dictatorship. On September 24th, Kersaint, a Breton gentleman, opened the attack, and was followed by others in the same strain; they demanded also that an army should be raised from each of the departments, to protect the Assembly, and to guard against the designs of the deputies of Paris. The debate continued through the following day, and matters were brought to a crisis by the cry of Lasource, pointing to Robespierre: "Behold the man whom I denounce to you!"¹ Robespierre rose for his defence, and at length asked who would formally accuse him. Barbaroux eagerly sprang to his feet: "Barbaroux, of Marseilles, presents himself to sign the denunciation," and he repeated that Robespierre aimed at the dictatorship. At last Marat demanded to be heard, but cries of hatred rose on every side; "down, down," rang through the hall, at the sight of the ragged figure, and the head bound with a dirty cloth, menacing, sombre, the embodiment of vengeance against the oppressors; the representative of the sufferings of the masses; "I have many

¹ *Histoire de la Révolution*, Mignet, vol. i, p. 308.

personal enemies in this Assembly," he began—"All, all," shouted the Convention, rising in a body ; but Marat was not to be dismayed, and there is a certain grandeur in the dauntlessness with which he faced the turbulent assemblage, knowing, as he did, that the guillotine would greet him outside the doors of the Convention, if he were thrust out. Boldly he avowed that he had suggested, had urged, a dictatorship, believing that it was necessary for the safety of the new Republic ; no personal ambition could be laid at his door ; " behold and judge ! " and he pointed to his soiled and tattered dress ; " what has been my life ? I have been shut up in subterraneous cellars. I have condemned myself to penury, and every danger." ¹ Marat triumphed, by his audacity and by his manifest disinterestedness, and the attack of the Girondins was a failure. Louvet tried once more on October 29th, with a carefully prepared impeachment of Robespierre, and his fiery eloquence carried all before it for the moment ; but Robespierre coldly rose and demanded a week to prepare his defence, and on November 8th he spoke, amid hostile faces and frigid looks of dislike ; he was accused of approving illegal acts : " Acts which are illegal ? Does one save a nation by the general code ? Yes, our acts were illegal ; as the taking of the Bastille was illegal, as liberty itself was illegal ! Citizens, do you desire a Revolution without a Revolution ? "

¹ *Life of Robespierre*, G. H. Lewes, p. 262.

Robespierre concluded by a few touching words in favour of concord and unity of action, and he sat down amid vehement applause, having foiled the attempts of his enemies, and having given to his growing power all that additional dignity which ever comes to strength when its worth is tried, and it triumphantly passes the ordeal.

While these internal combats were convulsing the Convention, the Committee appointed to decide on the competency of the Assembly to bring Louis to trial, and on the inviolability of the King, had been quietly proceeding with their task, and on November 6th—the very day on which the young Republicans were scaling the heights of Jemappes—they presented their Report, a Report in which they declared that inviolability belonged to the King as King only, and not as individual; that although a King acting through his ministers was inviolable, because the ministers were then responsible, a King acting apart from them could not be inviolable, since he must then necessarily be responsible, as the acts were his only, and there was no one else who could be called to account for them. It declared, further, that the Convention was able to judge him, being in fact, the representative of the people, to whom he was responsible for his actions.

The discussion on the Report began on November 18th, and was long and keen. St. Just hotly declared that Louis was not a criminal to be judged, but an enemy to be struck; but this theory was

little countenanced by the Assembly, although Robespierre also supported it, on the ground that either Louis or the Republic must be condemned. "To propose the trial of Louis XVI is to question the Revolution. If he may be tried, he may be acquitted; if he may be acquitted, he may be innocent. But, if he be innocent, what becomes of the Revolution? . . . Insurrection is the trial of the tyrant—his sentence is his fall from power . . . For myself, I abhor the penalty of death. I neither love nor hate Louis; I hate nothing but his crimes. I demanded the abolition of capital punishment in the Constituent Assembly, and it is not my fault if the first principles of reason have appeared moral and judicial heresies. But you, who never thought this mercy should be exercised in favour of those whose offences are pardonable, by what fatality are you reminded of your humanity to plead the cause of the greatest of criminals? You ask an exception from the punishment of death for him who alone could render it legitimate! A dethroned king in the very heart of a Republic not yet cemented! A king whose very name draws foreign wars on the nation! Neither prison nor exile can make his an innocent existence. It is with regret I pronounce the fatal truth: Louis must perish rather than a hundred thousand virtuous citizens! Louis must perish because our country must live!"¹ "He demanded that the Convention, declaring Louis XVI

¹ *Life of Robespierre*, G. H. Lewes, pp. 273, 274.

traitor to the French, criminal to humanity, should at once condemn him to death by right of insurrection." ¹ Grégoire spoke strongly against the inviolability of the King. Thomas Paine urged the trial, "you are bound to judge him," said he. The departments, the towns, sent up petitions demanding the head of the traitor. A discovery made at this time seemed to add the voice of Louis himself to those of his enemies, and to imperiously demand his trial; for, on November 20th, his old friend Gamain, his fellow-locksmith, went to Roland and told him that shortly before August 10th, Louis, with his help, had constructed a secret hiding-place in a dark passage leading to his cabinet in the Tuileries, and had closed it with an iron door, skilfully constructed and covered by the panelling of the wall. Since the completion of this work, Gamain had never been well, and he had at last come to the conclusion that the King had poisoned him, in a glass of wine he gave him after they had finished, in order that no witness of his secret might remain. In revenge, Gamain revealed the hiding-place, and Roland at once went to the Tuileries, broke into it, and carried off the papers it contained. These papers, together with others seized in the Tuileries, discovered a mass of secret conspiracies; one document was a letter of the Princes to Louis XVI, proving that the latter was conniving with his brother and the emigrants at the very moment when, in his proclamations,

¹ *Histoire de la Révolution*, Mignet, vol. i, p. 828.

he was appealing to them not to resist, by the interests of the country, by the ties of family, and by the laws of honour. Others were printers' bills for libels circulated against the National Assembly; a letter from Milan, rejoicing that by the declaration of war the "imbecile legislators had fallen into the snare, and had put a halter round their necks;" an account of the Civil List, showing that on August 8th, the treasurer had paid, on the King's order, the expenses of the emigrant Princes;¹ letters showing secret intrigues with members of the Assembly. These documents settled the fate of the King, and the Convention nominated twenty-one members to draw up his impeachment.

During all these debates as to his fate Louis had been living calmly and peacefully in his prison-home, occupying himself chiefly in reading and in teaching his young son; the Temple was dark and dreary, and the rooms small; the Royal Family were kept under the strictest surveillance, and their gaolers—who succeeded each other in regular rotation—were often rough and coarse; at the same time the Commune appear to have desired to keep them plainly, but without actual stint; "a list of everything necessary for the Royal Family was drawn up—linen, furniture, clothing, fuel, and books—and it was liberally provided at the expense of the Commune."² Their table was lavishly served;

¹ *Histoire de la Révolution*, Louis Blanc, p. 182.

² *History of the Girondists*, Lamartine, vol. ii, p. 286.

to take dinner as a sample—" it consisted of three soups, four entrées, two roasts, four entremets, three dishes of stewed fruits, three plates of fruit, three pats of butter, a bottle of champagne, small flasks of Malvoisie, Bordeaux, and Madeira, four cups of coffee, cream, etc." From August the 18th to September the 9th 1544 pounds of poultry were consumed, and in September alone eighty baskets of peaches; the table expenses during three and a half months cost no less than 35,172 francs (£1,406).¹ From these details it may be judged how far from true is the idea that the Royal Family were treated with brutal severity; of course imprisonment is not pleasant either to prince or peasant, and when Kings fall there are plenty of people to bewail their cruel fate, not because they are human, but because they are Royal. Compare the imprisonment of Louis and of Marie Antoinette with that of the political captives whom they and preceding Sovereigns had thrown into the dungeons of France, and then judge between the Monarchical and the Republican severity. For the thousands whom Kings have tortured and slain no tears are shed, though these Royal captives have so much of sympathy showered on them. Pity enough for the child-Dauphin in the Temple, but no pity for hundreds of children who pine and die in garrets when the Democrat breadwinner is seized by Kingly agents; and yet, odd as it may seem, these all suffer as acutely as can Royal

¹ *Histoire de la Révolution*, Louis Blanc, p. 276.

prisoners, and the peasant blood throbs as painfully in the aching brow as does the blood which flows in the veins of a captive King. Until the end of September the King and his family lived entirely together; but on September 29th the King was removed to a different part of the prison, and the Dauphin was placed with him. The separation was, however, more nominal than real, as, according to Cléry, their own personal servant, who waited on them throughout, the King and the Dauphin were summoned to breakfast at nine o'clock, and stopped for the remainder of the day with the rest of the Royal Family.¹

The danger they ran from popular turbulence and ferocity may be estimated by the fact that a tricoloured ribbon stretched across the gate of the Temple was a barrier strong enough to keep in check the fiercest of mobs. Of course there were plenty of plots for escape, both within and without the prison walls, and for such plots neither King nor Queen should be blamed, for any prisoner is justified in endeavouring to escape, unless he has given his parole not to break bounds; but the existence of these plots is the justification of the strict watch which was kept upon the captives. The frequent changes made in the guards at the Temple appears to have frustrated every successive design, as thus no time was afforded for corrupting them, and every attempt

¹ *Memoirs*, Weber, vol. iii, pp. 252—254.

met with complete disappointment. Death alone was the gaoler who should throw open the prison-gates, and set the captives free.

Louis was summoned to his trial on December 11th, 1792. and from that day he was separated from his family, and only saw them again on the day before his death; for the last time the father, mother, and children breakfasted together, and at eleven o'clock the King left them, by order of the Commissioners of the Municipality; very shortly afterwards, Chambon, the new Mayor, and Chaumette, the Procureur, entered the King's room, and summoned him to the bar of the Convention; slowly they fared through the streets of Paris, through the armed guards, through the silent crowds, hearing only now and then a few notes of the Marseillaise. By two o'clock the carriage reached the Assembly Hall, and Santerre, with his hand on Louis's arm, led the traitor-King before the representatives of the nation he had betrayed. The prisoner entered amid dead silence, and looked upon his judges; a chair had been placed for him at the bar, the same chair, by the strange irony of fate, in which he had sat on that 4th day of February, 1790, when he had paid his visit of encouragement to the Constituent Assembly, and from which, on September 14th, 1791, he had declared his acceptance of the Constitution, and had sworn to maintain and to defend it. The Assembly was awaiting him in silence, for as soon as his

coming was announced Barère had said gravely : "Citizens, remember the terrible silence which accompanied Louis on his return from Vincennes, the silence heralding the judgment of Kings by nations."¹ This silence was broken by the voice of Barère, who sat as president : "Louis, the French nation accuses you. You are now to hear the statement of the accusations against you. Louis, be seated." A list of 57 questions had been prepared, and after the charges had been read, Louis was interrogated, and answered each question briefly, sometimes admitting the fact preferred and justifying his action, at others denying the authenticity of the documents which proved his guilt ; he even denied his own handwriting, as well as any knowledge of the iron closet of the Tuileries, filled, though it was, with his own papers. "Summarised his answers were : 'That was before the acceptance of the Constitution ;' or, 'I had the right to do so at that time ;' or, 'That concerns the ministers ;' or 'I know nothing about that ;' or, 'I do not remember it.'"² Once only he spoke eagerly ; when accused of having caused the bloodshed of August 10th, he exclaimed : "No, no that was not my doing." The interrogatory was finished by about five o'clock, and Louis was re-conducted to his prison, and was from henceforth alone ; that his grief, however, was not overwhelming may be

¹ *Histoire de la Révolution*, Mignet, vol. i, p. 880.

² *Ibid.*, Louis Blanc, vol. ii, p. 284.

judged by the quaint note of the commissioner Albertier on the supper taken by the King: "Louis ate six cutlets, a large piece of fowl, and some eggs; he drank two glasses of white wine, one of Alicante, and then went to bed."¹ The account may not be pleasing to the sentimental Royalists who speak of the "martyred King," but it is reassuring, both as to the serenity of Louis himself, and as to the treatment he received from his gaolers. Louis had asked for the assistance of counsel, and the Convention, after his departure, decreed that he might select those whom he preferred. Louis chose MM. Tronchet and Target, but the latter refused, on the plea that he was too old for such a task; he was only 54, and the excuse was an absurdity, but the coward feared to undertake the defence of an accused Monarch, lest he should be suspected of Royalist leanings: such men fawn on Kings while they are powerful, and insult them when they are helpless. Tronchet, 10 years older, accepted the post without hesitation, and a young lawyer, named Desèze, was, on December 17th, selected to plead. Just as Target's base refusal became known, Barère was informed that Malesherbes desired to speak to him; the venerable minister, 74 years of age, came in, and was led to an armchair, while Barère stood in his presence. "Malesherbes intimated his desire to aid in the defence of Louis, and Barère answered: 'Sir, if I were not a member of the Convention, or if,

¹ *Histoire de la Révolution*, Louis Blanc, vol. ii, p. 285.

being a member, I might be a defender of the King, I would eagerly accept so noble an office.' 'Your opinion decides me,' replied Malesherbes . . . It was just after this interview that the magnanimous old man addressed to the President of the Convention the famous letter: 'Twice was I called to the councils of him who was my master, at a time when every one was ambitious of the office; I owe him the same service when the office is thought dangerous by some.'"¹ From the 14th to the 25th of December, Louis and his advocates were engaged in preparing the defence, and on the 26th Louis appeared again at the bar of the Assembly. Desèze spoke for three hours, bravely and well, pleading the inviolability of the King, his love for his people, his sacrifices for their good; he concluded: "Louis ascended the throne at twenty years of age; and at twenty years of age he, on the throne, set a pure example, showing no culpable weakness, no corrupting passions; he was economical, just, severe; he ever showed himself the steady friend of the people. The people desired the destruction of a disastrous tax which weighed on them, he destroyed it. The people demanded the abolition of serfdom; he began by its abolition on his own estates. The people solicited reforms in criminal legislation to soften the position of the accused; he granted these reforms. The people wished that the thousands of Frenchmen, whom harsh custom had hitherto

¹ *Histoire de la Révolution*, Louis Blanc, vol. ii, p. 285.

deprived of the rights of citizenship, should acquire or recover these rights; he bestowed them by his laws. The people wished for liberty; he gave it. He even went beyond their wishes in his sacrifices; and yet it is in the name of these very people that it is now asked . . . Citizens, I will not conclude the sentence . . . I stop myself before history: remember that she will judge your judgment, and that hers is that of posterity." To the plea of his advocate Louis only added a few words: "My defence has been laid before you; I will not repeat it. In speaking to you, perhaps for the last time, I declare to you that my conscience reproaches me with nothing, and that my defenders have said but the truth. I have never feared a public examination into my conduct; but my heart is torn by finding in the articles of impeachment the imputation that I desired to shed the blood of the people, and above all that the misfortunes of the 10th of August are attributed to me. I confess that the multiplied proofs which I have given of my love for the people, and the manner in which I have ever acted, appear to me to prove that I was always ready to risk myself in order to save them, and should for ever protect me from such an imputation."¹ When Louis says he never desired to shed the blood of his people, one must presume that he had forgotten his letter to Bouillé after the massacre of Nancy, in

¹ *Annals of the French Revolution*, Mojeville, vol. ix, pp. 300, 301.

which he expressed "my extreme satisfaction" with the needless severity. As though still further to destroy the effect of the defence, a bunch of keys chanced to be found at the Tuileries, labelled by Thierry, the King's valet: "Keys entrusted to me by the King, August 12th, 1792," which were found to belong to the iron closet. The President asked Louis what this label meant, but Louis only said that he thought he had seen some of the keys, but he could not recognise them. The President answered drily; "You may retire,"¹ and Louis left his judges, deceitful to the end; his last words to his people were untrue, giving a sad consistency to the whole of his dealings with them, plausible and false.

It now remained only to give the verdict, but before the giving, any member who so chose had the right to speak, and so many availed themselves of the right that day after day went on, and no end came to the speeches, and the people outside grew impatient, and deputation after deputation asked for a verdict against Louis. At last, it is decided that the voting shall begin on January 15th, 1793. Three questions are to be decided: "Guilty or not guilty?" "Shall appeal be made to the people to endorse the verdict?" "If guilty, what shall be the sentence?" The answer to the first question, ten abstaining from voting,²

¹ *Histoire de la Révolution*, Louis Blanc, vol. ii, p. 293.

² Their names are given by Lamartine, *History of the Girondists*, vol. ii, pp. 329, 330.

is unanimous: "Guilty." Of that fact no doubt could rest in the mind of any member, and the voices ring out the first notes of the passing knell of Louis. "Shall appeal be made to the people?" No; 281 voices are in favour of such appeal, but 423 are against it, and the respite it would give is not to be granted to the King: the passing bell tolls louder and clearer in the air. Thus far the Convention have progressed by the evening of the 15th; to-morrow must begin the final struggle: "What shall be the sentence?" On Wednesday, January 16th, at ten o'clock in the morning, the fatal sitting opens, but the roll-call does not begin until 8 p.m.—begins amid a strange scene; for Paris crowds round the hall, and within sit ladies, eating ices and flirting, marking down on their cards the vote of each deputy, and in the galleries sit poorer women, knitting, and the judgment-hall has more the aspect of a theatre than a solemn trial, on the issue of which depends a human life. The sitting is to go on until the verdict is passed, and it lasts from 8 p.m. on Wednesday, until 8 p.m. on Thursday; every vote is to be pronounced aloud from the tribune, and deputy after deputy rises, ascends, and speaks—"Death"; "Exile"; the solemn words are oftentimes prefaced by phrases and explanations, unlistened to by the motley throng, only a hush falls to listen to the vote, and "death," "death," "death," booms out in various tones, and the passing bell sounds fuller and deeper in the air.

How will the Gironde vote? the name of Vergniaud is heard, at the head of the list, and the eloquent Republican ascends: "Death," says the thrilling, musical voice, and one after another the Girondins follow their leader. At last all have spoken, and the scrutiny of the votes is going on, and Vergniaud takes the Presidential chair and awaits the result; at last he rises; "361 is the absolute majority; 366 have voted for death. I declare, then, in the name of the National Convention, that the punishment it pronounces on Louis Capet is—death."¹ After the sentence was pronounced a letter from Louis was read, asking for an appeal to the people, and for delay in the execution of the sentence, and another wearisome debate and vote took place; at last, at 3 o'clock on Sunday morning (January 20th), the affair is finished; "death within 24 hours."

The decree runs as follows: "Article 1. The National Convention declares that Louis Capet, last King of the French, is guilty of conspiring against the liberty of the nation, and of *atteniat* against the safety of the State. Article 2. The National Convention declares that Louis Capet shall suffer the penalty of death." Article 3 rejects the appeal to the people. "Article 4. The Provisional Executive Council shall, in the course of the day, notify

¹ *Histoire de la Terreur*, Mortimer Ternaux, vol. v, p. 452, Ed. 1866. The various historians give different lists of this voting; Louis Blanc gives "death, without conditions," 367; "exile, or death under certain circumstances," 334; making the majority for death 53; Alison, on what authority I know not, gives 510 to 269; Mignet gives a majority of 26.

the present decree to Louis Capet, and shall take all measures necessary to assure its execution within 24 hours from the notification thereof; the Council shall also render account of all to the the Convention, after the execution of the decree."

This decree was entrusted to Lebrun, Minister of War, Garat, Minister of Justice, with some other functionaries, and they proceeded to the Temple and informed Louis of his fate; he begged for three days' delay, for a special confessor, and for an interview with his family; the first request was refused, the others were granted; M. Edgeworth de Firmont, the selected priest, was at once summoned, and in the evening Louis embraced his wife and children for the last time. They remained together alone for two hours, and then the King tore himself away, promising to see them again at seven o'clock the next morning. The promise was not kept, nor intended to be kept, for Louis dreaded the final parting; it was only an excuse to make the farewell the easier; only one more falsehood to close a false life. At eight o'clock the next morning the Municipal officers arrive, and at nine Santerre summons the King to start; a carriage awaits him and his confessor, and, accompanied by two officers, he enters, and starts on his last journey. The streets are deep-lined with armed guards, and loaded cannon stand at the meetings of the roads; 40,000 men are under arms but yet Louis seems to look for rescue, and indeed a faint attempt at rescue is

made as the carriage crosses the end of the Rue Beauregard, but so feeble is it that it passes almost without notice, and they fare forward unarrested. At ten minutes past ten the carriage stops at the foot of the scaffold; Louis delays some moments; at last he steps out, and a look of anguish crosses his face: "I am lost! I am lost!"

The executioners then surround him to prepare him for the fatal blow, but he pushes them back roughly, and himself removes his collar; they attempt to bind his hands; he struggles, but at last submits at the prayer of his confessor; then he mounts the steps of the scaffold, and approaching the edge signs for silence: "I die innocent of the crimes imputed to me; I pardon the authors of my death, and I pray God that the blood you shed may never fall on France." The roll of the drums drowns his voice, and Louis stamps angrily as he cries for silence. Six executioners advance and a painful and undignified scene ensues; he struggles with them, but is overborne and bound to the fatal plank; as he "utters terrible cries" the knife falls, and the King of France is dead.

Vive la République! is the sole cry that echoes round the scaffold: *Vive la République!* is the hope that springs, flower-like, from the Monarch's grave. But alas! Republics are not made by King-killing; they grow only out of people-educating. Kings are never really slain by the axe that cuts short the individual life, for, with the death of one, another

King is born, and all the harm that the dead King might have done can be done by the living King, aye, and done with deadlier might, for he is hallowed by the tragedy which creates him, and he is pure from the crimes which have destroyed his predecessor. Kings are only slain when peoples have outgrown them, when nations are too large-brained to bow to a golden circlet, and to bend the knee before the robe that is Royal-named. King-murder is a crime, as all murder is a crime, and the plea of necessity is manifestly absurd; "never can a Republican be persuaded to think," said Brissot, "that one man must die in order that twenty-five millions may be free; that liberty would be in danger unless his blood be shed; never can a Republican believe that, to kill Royalty, it is necessary to kill him who possesses it; for in that case it would also become necessary to kill all those who might hereafter possess it."¹ Not in letters of blood is the doom of a Monarchy written; not in the prison-cell of Royalty, or in the severed head of a King. But we see its doom written in every school where children learn to think; in every book of science issued by the press; in every type of nobler manhood and of loftier womanhood; in every effort of freer thought and bolder speech; in these we see written the doom of the Monarchies that have desolated earth, in these the promise of the Republics that shall rise when to-morrow dawns.

¹ *Histoire de la Terreur*, Mortimer Ternaux, vol. v, p. 481.

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PART II

LECTURE VII¹

THE REPUBLIC IN DEATH-GRIPS

THE head of Louis XVI had fallen upon the scaffold, and the crown, in the fond belief of the Royalists, had fallen on the golden haired child in the dismal Temple prison; "From the moment at which she learned the execution of Louis XVI, Marie Antoinette treated her son, a child, with all the respect she deemed due to a king."² A sad succession had Louis the Dauphin; the father died struggling on the scaffold; the son pined away silently in the gaol.

Turn we from the mourners in the Temple to France, kingless, facing Europe in arms. For a moment the Convention was at peace; the Gironde and the Montagne for a moment laid down their arms against each other to turn them against the foes encircling France. For on the day that the king's head fell the English ambassador left Paris, and three days later, on January 24th, the French

¹ The six preceding lectures carrying the story up to the death of Louis XVI, on January 21st, 1793, were, in the English editions, published in a separate volume.

² *Histoire de la Révolution*, Louis Blanc, vol. ii, p. 318.

embassy was expelled from London, the Brunswick royalty hotly resolute that no peace should be possible with France, where royalty had been quenched in blood. What if the cry from Paris should ring in St. James's, and the Republic should step across the "silver streak"?

On the 28th a Royal message was brought to Parliament, announcing that ~~the~~ army and navy would be at once increased, a measure necessitated by "the atrocious act recently perpetrated at Paris," and by the danger to the order of the civilised world brought about by the ambition of the French.¹ In vain did some cooler headed Englishmen, such as Lords Stanhope, Landsdowne, and Derby, protest against a war with France, and urge that the policy of Pitt must, and could, only result in war. England was not alone in the determination of her rulers to crush out the young Republic, ere the contagion of the Revolution successful should spread to other lands.

There is a crash of declarations of war; Pitt, cool and crafty, has succeeded in irritating France to madness, and on February 1st the war-challenge bursts from her lips. Russia chases the French from her borders, and forbids her people to communicate in any fashion with the French nation. Prussia cries for vengeance on the murderers of Louis, and Naples, whose queen is a sister of Marie Antoinette, throws herself into the league. On the

¹ *Annual Register*, 1793.

south, Spain joins the foes of France, and a ring of fire well nigh encircles the young Republic. Eleven armies menace her, with a total of 875,000 men.

And even while this thunder of battle is growling on the horizon, famine once more strikes Paris herself. On the 24th February famishing crowds are gathering round the bakers' shops, crying for bread. And now there comes a strange deputation of washerwomen from the banks of the Seine to the Convention, complaining that the sellers of soap are exorbitant in their charges, and that they need soap for their labour, that by its fruits they may buy bread. "Bread and Soap! Bread and Soap." Such are the cries that hurtle round the sorely tried Convention, so heavily burdened with matters more pressing than soap, whatever may be argued as to the pressing necessity for bread. "It was Sunday. The Convention adjourned the matter till Tuesday. But they [the washerwomen] cried, as they went: 'We adjourn it till Monday. When our children ask for milk we do not send them away till the day after to-morrow.'" ¹ Surely this poor Convention had such family to manage, as never had mother before.

Nor has the anger of the starving been softened by a cry from Marat, in his *Journal de la République Française* (which had replaced the famous *Ami du Peuple*), issued on the morning of this seething 25th. Marat had painted in sombre

¹ *Histoire de la Révolution*, Louis Blanc, vol. ii, p. 825.

colours the sufferings of the people, caused, he alleged, by the unfair raising of prices by the shopkeepers, and had cried: "When the cowardly delegates of the people encourage crime by impunity, they ought not to be surprised if the people, driven desperate, does justice for itself. Let us leave the repressive measures of law; it is but too evident that they have always been, and always will be, without effect. In any country where the rights of the people are not empty titles written pompously in a mere declaration, the pillage of a few shops, at the door-posts of which the monopolists should be hung, would put an end to the malversations." On the evening of the day on which this advice appeared the shops were invaded in several of the streets, and the contents sold at fixed prices by self-elected shop-keepers.

Louis Blanc thinks that these rioters were stirred up by Pitt's agents, and paid with English gold, in order that discredit might be thrown on the struggling Republic. It is scarce necessary to seek so far for reason for the rioting. In all great towns there is a dangerous class, which comes to the top in troublous times, and in Paris above all—after the courts of Louis XIV and Louis XV, with the unutterable degradation caused by them, and with the hopeless misery resulting from the taxes wrung from the poor to fill the gulf of Royal extravagance—there was no need for foreign instigation to cause bread riots and the pillage of shops.

The Girondin portion of the Convention, cut to the heart by the shame thus brought on their beloved Revolution, strove to disentangle the Republic from the scandal by demanding a decree of accusation against Marat, as the instigator of the riots. The Montagne did not yet love Marat but it hated more the Gironde, and thus the quarrel between Gironde and Montagne broke out once more. A hot scene took place. "Bancal demanded that Marat should be imprisoned as a dangerous lunatic. 'I propose that we vote on the accusation,' said the Girondin Boileau, 'that we may know who are the friends of Marat, and the cowards who are afraid to strike him.' 'Yes, the vote by name,' cried Bazire, 'that we may see who are the anti-Revolutionists.' 'I challenge the decree of accusation,' said Marat, 'but it is for the sake of covering you with infamy.' 'Silence, fool!' cried Thomas. In the opinion of Buzot, the decree of accusation was impolitic and dangerous: 'Impolitic, because Marat would be acquitted, on the ground of the complete liberty of the press; dangerous, because of the importance which it would give to a man who,' said the Girondin chief, 'did not act by himself, but was the mere tool of evil men.' 'It is one of Buzot's calumnies,' cried the Montagne. 'Pigs! Fools!' snarled Marat, glaring at the Girondins."¹ The Girondins failed in their attack, and the question of prosecution was referred to the judicial authorities.

¹ *Histoire des Journaux*, vol. i, p. 518.

Now for a brief space we again lose sight of the internal troubles, so gloomy is the news that comes from Dumouriez in the early days of March. The ring of fire is coming nearer; what can Paris do? Then Danton (March 10th), prompt always in the hour of need, springs up, and his voice of thunder rolls through the startled town, silencing discord, summoning aid, calling on France to rise and save herself. "Do we will to be free? Let us march! . . . Send out your commissioners; support them by your energy; let them start to-night, this evening; let them say to the wealthy: 'Either the aristocracy of Europe, succumbing before us, must pay our debt, or you must pay it. The people have only blood; they are pouring it out like water. Come, miserable misers! pour out your wealth.'" Then passionately, maddened by the danger and the apparent hopelessness of the struggle, Danton the dauntless cried in his wrath: "Let France be free, though my name be blighted! What care I that they call me drinker of blood? Let us drink, if we must, the blood of the enemies of humanity!" And even in his fury—not surely to be judged as though he spoke in cold blood and with deliberation—softening and returning to his nobler self: "No debate, no quarrels, and the country is saved!"

The Convention answered to the courage of the man who never failed France in the hour of her need. No paltering with the danger should there be, no hiding of the immediate peril. Two Commissioners

to each of the forty-eight sections of Paris, to call for volunteers, to collect arms, to rouse enthusiasm. Eighty messengers to scour France and carry the news to her farthest border. Once more in Paris streets was heard the stirring chorus of the *Marseillaise*; every theatre was closed; black flags hung from the church towers; the alarm bells sent out their message on the throbbing air; all Paris seethed with fury, and alas! with suspicion too, lest traitors within her gates should be holding commerce with the enemy. And Dumouriez? was Dumouriez loyal? Marat's harsh cry was heard denouncing him. But Dumouriez was a friend of the Girondins. What if the Girondins should be plotting?

Robespierre gave voice to the half-uttered rumour, and aroused to passion height once more the fury of the maddened people. In a proclamation, issued in the name of the Jacobins, he declared that all the misfortunes which had befallen the army were due to the Girondin intrigues. "He accused them of having been the instigators of pillage, in order to dishonour popular doctrines, and to rank the rich, the proprietors and the commercialists, on the side of the counter-revolution. He demanded a rampart of heads between the nation and its enemies, and first those of the Girondins."¹

The remembrance of September had come to warn the cooler heads of the danger which might flash

¹ Lamartine's *History of the Girondists*, vol. II, p. 450.

into lightning from these heavily charged electric clouds of popular fear and wrath. Some swift judging Tribunal, swift, yet following legal form, and avoiding causeless condemnation of the innocent, might perchance act as legal lightning-conductor, and prevent the destructive flash. It had, therefore, been suggested that a Revolutionary Tribunal should be appointed, judging without appeal, and on the 9th of March the Convention had decided, with but one dissentient, that such a tribunal should be formed "to judge traitors, conspirators, and anti-Revolutionists". On the 10th it was proposed that the tribunal should consist of nine members of the Convention, which should observe no special forms, but take denunciations wherever it could get them. This was rejected, on the earnest pleadings of the leading Girondins, and it was voted by a large majority that a tribunal should be at once formed with a jury as part of it, but apparently nothing more would have been done at the moment had not Danton summoned the deputies to meet again that very evening to definitely organise the tribunal. They met and constituted the afterwards famous Revolutionary Tribunal, to consist of five judges to apply the law, after a jury had pronounced on the fact; the jury was to be elected by the Convention, and each member of the jury was to vote aloud in public—a dangerous method for a time of wild suspicion. In addition there was to be a Public Accuser, charged with the duty of

prosecution. To this last post Fouquier Tinville was appointed. On the 5th April the first sitting of this Revolutionary Tribunal was held.

While the Convention were establishing this tribunal, the very danger they were trying to guard against was making head outside. A band of furious men visited the Jacobin Club and other political societies, and demanded that an attack should be forthwith made on the Girondins, whom they denounced as traitors. When they appealed to the Municipality, Hébert rejected them scornfully, and in each section they met with similar failure. So threatening, however, were the rumours that many Girondins absented themselves from the evening sitting of the Convention. Louvet, one of them, seems to have lost his head very completely, and ran from house to house, with news of an impending massacre. Two Girondins went to consult the new mayor, Pache, who assured them that the Municipality had refused to listen to the rioters, and had taken every precaution for maintaining tranquillity. Pétion, a cooler headed Girondin, urged a second time by Louvet to escape, calmly opened his window, and looking out, remarked, with a true appreciation of the instigators to riot: "It is raining; nothing will happen!"¹ As a matter of fact nothing did happen, save an increase of general uneasiness, brought about chiefly by the exaggerated fears of Louvet and a few others. There is no proof that

¹ *Histoire de la Révolution*, Louis Blanc, vol. ii, p. 380.

the Montagne was concerned in any way in the abortive conspiracy; on the contrary it was denounced, even by Marat, and met with repulsion at the Jacobin Club. Vergniaud, in an eloquent speech on the 13th March, declared that the whole plot was of Royalist fabrication, and that the aristocracy hoped to destroy the Convention by itself. Louvet, and one or two of his friends only, denounced the Montagne as the authors of the attempt. "The only ones interested in disorder," says Louis Blanc, "were the Royalists, to whom anarchy could not fail to offer both tools and opportunities. This is what Louvet, blinded by his passions, would have refused to say, and what Vergniaud had the courage to proclaim, in his generous impulse towards truth and justice."¹

And now, to add to the fearful burden of the Republic, an insurrection partly Royalist, partly religious, partly social, broke out in the west. The drawing of men for the army was one of the chief grievances alleged, but there is no doubt that in La Vendée a vigorous attempt was made by the territorial nobles to re-establish the feudal system, so happily destroyed. The cry of royalty was but a cloak to cover their own advantage, while the cry of religion was a lure to attach to their cause the brave, but superstitious, peasantry. A terrible crime inaugurated the rebellion. A magistrate named Sauveur was, on the 15th March, suddenly

¹ *Histoire de la Révolution*, Louis Blanc, vol. ii, p. 340.

attacked by a mob and thrown into prison ; on the following day he was dragged from his dungeon, and in order to make him cry *Vive le Roi* ! his captors inflicted on him the most frightful tortures ; but no words save *Vive la République ! Vive la Nation !* could be extorted from this faithful child of France. At last, torn and gashed, he was flung, yet living, into the flames, and from out the fire came his expiring cry : *Vive la République ! Vive la Nation !*

Between the 11th and the 15th March, some 800 persons, almost all Republican functionaries, were murdered by the revolted peasantry, and eight western departments (Deux-Sèvres, Vendée, Maine-et-Loire, Loire-Inférieure, Ile-et-Vilaine, Côtes-du-Nord, Morbilian, and Finisterre), were in open rebellion.¹ The simple peasants, devoted to their priests, were led captive by the most foolish tales of miracle and wonder. A black cat, shut up maliciously in the tabernacle on the altar served by a loyal priest, sprang out on the startled congregation, and was declared to be the devil by the papal adherents.² Fraudulent apparitions were arranged, and visions of angels brought messages to the faithful. News of the fresh trouble reached Paris on the 18th, and official Commissioners arrived on the 23rd to ask for help. The prejudice growing against the Girondins was increased by the curious

¹ *Histoire de la Terreur*, Mortimer-Ternaux, vol. vi, pp. 272, 278.

² *Histoire de la Révolution*, Louis Blanc, vol. ii, p. 345.

fact, that when the messengers from La Vendée reached the Convention, and after a warm reception were referred to the General Committee, the Girondin members of this body treated their report with chill indifference, while those of the Montagne threw themselves eagerly into the question of their needs. Santerre and Marat proposed immediate action, but Girondins set themselves against all suggestions of help. The Executive, however, promptly granted money and men to assist the Republican authorities, but for many a day La Vendée was to be a running sore, weakening the already overburdened State, while the Girondins suffered in public estimation for the apparent lack of patriotism they had displayed.

On the 21st came the news of the defeat of Dumouriez at Neerwinden on March 18th, and with the indomitable courage with which the Convention forged a new weapon to meet every new peril, by the 28th March it had, at the suggestion of Isnard, constituted the General Committee of Public Safety, of twenty-five members, charged with the external and internal defence of the Republic. This committee consisted of Pétion, Vergniaud, Isnard, Condorcet, Dubois-Crancé, Buzot, Delmas, Guadet, Bréard, Prieur de la Marne, Barrère, Quinette, Gensonné, Rhul, Cambacères, Lasource, Sièyes, Jean Débry, Barbaroux, Guyton-Morveau, Camus, Fabre d'Eglantine, Camille Desmoulins, Danton, and Robespierre.

Even this concentration of power, however, proved to be insufficient. For now fell another blow, stunning in its violence—the open treason of Dumouriez. On every side the armies of France were being beaten back; Dumouriez blamed the Convention; the Convention rebuked Dumouriez. At last the General broke out into open defiance, and Danton, rushing from Paris to the frontier, failed to win him back to duty. The hero of Valmy and of Jemappes was idolised by his soldiers, and among them he hoped to find the materials for enforcing a Royal restoration and the Constitution of 1791, a restoration in which he should play the part of a General Monk. At last, on April 2nd, a decree from the Convention was delivered to him, summoning him to Paris, and thus forcing him to choose between the cessation of his intrigue and open rebellion. Dumouriez seized the commissioners of the Republic, and handed them over to the Austrian general, and then himself fled to the camp of his country's foes. England pensioned the traitor, and he died at Henley-on-Thames in 1828, despised by honest men, loathed by the France he had betrayed.¹

This treachery of Dumouriez, which at first seemed to place France at the mercy of the coalesced kings of Europe, reacted against the Girondins, as his friends and defenders; enormously increased

¹ For a full account of Dumouriez' treachery, see Lamartine's *History of the Girondists*, vol. ii.

the popularity of Marat, who had steadily denounced him; and drove Danton, hesitating between the Gironde and the Montagne, into the arms of the latter, lest he, too, should be suspected, in consequence of his former friendship, of complicity in the final treason. Already on the 1st April Danton had been attacked by Lasource for his warm praise of Dumouriez' ability, and his eagerness to palliate the general's faults, while Biroteau had declared that Fabre d'Eglantine, Danton's friend, had proposed a king. "It is an infamy," shouted Danton in his lion's voice; "it is you who would defend the king, and throw your crimes on us." A few moments of doubt, of general excitement, of hesitation on the part of Danton, and then the Montagne shouting his name, cheering him, encouraging him, and the die is cast, the Titan of the Revolution¹ springs into the orator's tribune, and his thunderous eloquence rolls out the accusation of the Gironde, the presage of their approaching doom. And as each passionate period leaves his lips, a strident voice points the accusation. At each pause in the vaguer denunciations of the angry orator the harsh croak supplies an appropriate Girondin name. "Patriots have been murdered."—"Lepelletier." "There has been correspondence with Dumouriez."—"Letters of Gensonné." "When Dumouriez was in Paris there were some who supped with him clandestinely."—"Lasource was one of them." It is Marat, who

¹ Carlyle.

sees coming the day of his triumph. It is the Montagne incarnate whetting the knife of the guillotine.

The news of the desertion of Dumouriez reached Paris on the 4th April, and on the same day the indomitable Convention announced that it assumed the direct control of the armies of France, and forthwith dispatched eight commissioners to the front to assume the supreme command. An extraordinary step, yet a most successful one, for the very spirit of the Convention seemed to pass into the army, and every throb of the heart of Paris pulsed through her soldiers' ranks. And in order that a yet greater concentration of power fit for prompt initiative and swift action may be gained, Barrère, on the following day, proposes a new and small committee, charged with supreme authority. Danton, Isnard, Thuriot, Mathieu, and himself are bidden to report on the proposal on the morrow, and on April 6th is created the famous Comité du Salut Public, the Committee of Public Safety, "in which the Revolution soon concentrated all its terrible vitality, and of which the mere remembrance still sets the world a-shuddering".¹

Of nine members only shall this band consist; they shall deliberate in secret; they shall watch and quicken ministerial action; they shall suspend any decrees of the executive which they judge contrary to the public good; the executive shall

¹ *Histoire de la Révolution*, Louis Blanc, vol. ii, p. 364.

obey their decrees, signed by at least two-thirds. It was a dictatorship of nine, charged to save the Republic, as of old, Rome placed herself, in moment of supreme peril, blindly in the hands of one dictator. Robespierre found no place in the first election: the chosen nine were Danton, Barrère, Delmas, Bréard, Cambon, Jean-Debry, Guyton-Morveau, Treilhard, Delacroix.

And now the final struggle begins between the Gironde and the Montagne, and charges of complicity with Dumouriez, and of desire to raise Philippe d'Orléans to Royal authority, are bandied about from side to side. Marat stirs up the popular anger outside, while Robespierre's finer skill leads the attack within the Convention. On the 8th April, Vergniaud, Guadet, Gensonné, Brissot, Barbaroux, Louvet, Buzot, and others are denounced by one of the Paris sections by name; on the 10th, Pétion, indignant, reads from the tribune a circular from another section, which declares that Roland deserves the scaffold, and that the majority of the Convention is corrupt; then uproar, rising into violence; Pétion and Danton struggling for the tribune; the president putting on his hat to close the sitting. On its re-opening, on the same day, a bitter passage of arms takes place between Robespierre and Vergniaud, after Danton has vainly endeavoured to make peace. And on the following day (April 11th) there is a terrible scene—commenced by an insult from Marat, thrown purposely as a match into

gunpowder—rising into absolute violence, into drawing of swords and pistols, then a breaking up in disorder amid wild cries, while Marat retires, chuckling to himself: "They will see now who are the accomplices of Capet." On the 12th a document, signed by Marat as president of the Jacobin Club, is read by Guadet, and despite the efforts of Danton, who implores them: *N'entamez pas la Convention* ("Do not make a breach in the Convention"), a decree is passed, committing Marat to the Abbaye. But the crowd surrounds *l'Ami du Peuple*, and the decree falls to the ground; but none the less, after an all-night session, by 220 votes to 92 is he remitted to the Revolutionary Tribunal. It was the first time that the inviolability of a representative of the people had been disregarded. The sacredness of the deputy surrounded Marat, criminal as he was, and the Gironde, in sending him before the Revolutionary Tribunal, made the first breach in the wall of reverence that surrounded the members of the National House, a breach through which, alas! they were themselves to be driven to the guillotine. Had Danton any prevision of the danger when he appealed to the inviolability of the deputies, when he uttered the words that later had so dread a comment: *N'entamez pas la Convention*? On the morrow a letter from Marat, declining to be arrested, and on the next day following Pache, the mayor of Paris, appears at the bar of the Convention with a

document signed by thirty-five out of the forty-eight sections of Paris, demanding that twenty-two Girondist members, including Vergniaud, Brissot, Guadet, Gensonné, Buzet, Pétion, Barbaroux, Louvet, and Lasource should be expelled, as guilty of felony against the sovereign people. So thickly have these storm-clouds gathered round the doomed, but noblest, party of the Revolution. The Convention, still dominated by Girondist genius, reject the petition of the sections, whereon arises now conflict between the Convention itself and the Commune (Municipality) of Paris; the latter will by no means give way, but orders 12,000 copies of its demand to be printed, and forms a committee of nine to communicate with the other eighty-three Communes of France. From this time forth the Convention and the Commune are at enmity, and Paris is divided against itself. The conflict adds one more difficulty to the story of the terrible struggle.

It seems almost incredible, but it is nevertheless true, that in the midst of these violent scenes, an admirable plan of a Republican Constitution had been quietly thought up and prepared by Condorcet, Gensonné, Barrère, Thomas Paine, Sièyes, and Barbaroux. It was presented to the Assembly on the 17th April, and was discussed, at intervals, until the 27th May. The plan was preceded by a magnificent declaration of the Rights of Man, in which I like to think that I can trace the influence of Thomas Paine. It is marvellous to see the

Republic of intellect thus struggling for life amid the miseries resulting from previous tyranny and corruption, from the coalesced kings without, and the civil war within. This Republic was the child of Voltaire, of Rousseau, of the Encyclopædists. It was slain by the Revolution of Marat.

And now approaches the trial of Marat. On the evening of the 28rd April he delivers himself up. A comfortable bed is ready for him; supper is prepared; municipal officers wait on him. No serious hostility here, seemingly, for the People's Friend. On the morrow crowds roll up round the courts. They fill the halls, the corridors, the adjacent streets. Marat has no defence to offer. He boasts himself the martyr, the apostle of liberty. The Girondins are the guilty parties. They would destroy him, then Robespierre, Danton, Camille Desmoulins. Where would they stop? The verdict of innocent scarce waits his conclusion, and then a veritable apotheosis. On the shoulders of the crowd he is borne onwards through the streets; they crown him with laurels; the Republic, Liberty, and Marat are joined in one cry of triumph; onwards, onwards, to the Convention, to the traitors who accused him, to the Gironde who thrust him forth; into the hall where the Convention is quietly and philosophically discussing the Constitution proposed by Condorcet—was ever irruption more irrelevant—came the surge of the mighty throng. "Marat

¹ See *Histoire de la Révolution*, Louis Blanc, vol. ii, p. 377.

has always been the friend of the people," cried a sapper, brandishing his axe in triumph, "and the people will always be the friend of Marat." Shouts, cries, red caps in air, on the one side; pale, grave faces, frowning and troubled, on the other. Marat, dirty, laurel-crowned, sardonic, with hate in his eyes and a sneer on his lips, glares down on his foes; at the golden-tongued Vergniaud, at Condorcet the philosopher, at Paine the bold thinker, at Brissot the powerful writer. His joy in his triumph is a joy over them. "They have put the rope round their necks," he hisses through his teeth. The acquittal of Marat is the death-warrant of the Gironde.

A strange man this Marat. The very incarnation of the misery, the degradation, and the final despair of the French poor. During the greater part of his political life hiding for safety in subterranean cellars; appearing from time to time at some Revolutionary club to denounce the oppressors and the tyrants; earning a precarious living by his pen; torn by an ambition which found no legitimate vent; filled with bitter hatred of the rich and the happy; Marat was the Spectre of the Revolution of Vengeance. He was the Crime of the Monarchy and of the Church, risen from the grave of the centuries to avenge the Past.

Necessarily he was a fanatic. He regarded himself as the instrument of God, and his furious diatribes as inspired. "The Gospel was constantly open on his table; and when this was noticed,

'The Revolution,' returned he, 'is in the Gospel. Nowhere is the cause of the people more energetically pleaded, or more maledictions heaped on the head of the rich and powerful of this world. Jesus Christ,' continued he, bowing reverentially when he uttered the name, 'Jesus Christ is our master.' " ¹

Thus in everything Marat was the antithesis of the Gironde. He cruel, violent, brooding only of revenge; they generous, dignified, dreaming ever of the future; he ruthless, striking at his foes; they scrupulous, and hampered in their duel with him by desire to keep as far as possible within the law; he breathing ever slaughter and suspicion; they speaking of love and brotherhood, and of the duties incumbent on the free; he wildly and fanatically religious; they philosophical, sceptical, atheistic; he remembering only the Past that had maddened him; they gazing ever at the Future, at the ideal Republic they were striving to upbuild. But a Republic can only be built on the rock of an educated, self-respecting, self-organised people; and alas! the Girondins had only for their foundation the sands of a newly-liberated, ignorant, pauperised nation, sands without coherence or stability, washed by the seething boiling waves of revenge, and the surf of popular passion and despair.

The triumph of Marat in the grudging Convention was followed by a wild oration at the Jacobin Club on

¹ Lamartine's *History of the Girondists*, vol. iv, p. 444.

the evening of the same day. "Mort aux Girondins !" (Death to the Girondins !) broke in at the pauses of the furious orator's tirade. Aye ! death to the Girondins, and death to all that was glorious in the Revolution, death to the Republic, devoured by her own children.

LECTURE VIII

GIRONDE AND MONTAGNE

THE revolt, now grown into a civil war, in La Vendée, and the continual pressure of famine in Paris itself, brought fresh fuel to the fire, so diligently fanned by Marat in his daily paper, now entitled *Publiciste de la République Française*. For some reason, now impossible to discover, the Girondins had, as we have seen (p. 256), treated with chill indifference the commissioners sent from La Vendée to ask for help. As the Vendean insurrection was nominally Royalist it was easy for Marat to represent the Girondin indifference as, in reality, tacit sympathy with royalty, and to recall their support of Dumouriez, whose intrigues for a Royalist restoration were notorious. "Traitors, traitors," was his daily cry in his journal, and he began to urge that the Convention should purge itself, that it should examine its own members: "Frappons les traîtres quelque part qu'ils se trouvent!"¹ (Let us strike traitors, wherever they may be.) No cry is more easily raised, none

¹ *Histoire des Journaux*, vol. i, p. 528.

more fatal to those against whom it is directed, than the cry of "traitor" in the midst of a Revolution. Each man suspects his neighbour, and treachery is at once so probable and so ruinous.

The troops of the Republic sent to crush the Vendean insurrection made no progress—nay, lost ground week by week. Louis Blanc vividly describes the Vendean method of warfare. "It was difficult to conquer men who spread themselves silently behind hedges, and never drew trigger without taking aim; who awaited the wavering of the enemy ere exposing themselves to fire, and then leapt the hedges, shouting aloud. When the flash from the mouths of the cannon aimed at them warned them of discharge, they threw themselves to the ground with the rapidity of lightning, then sprang to their feet, charged down on the guns, and, attacking the gunners foot-to-foot, carried the batteries. Accustomed to load as they ran, and perfect marksmen, their victories were bloody in the extreme, while, vanquished, they disappeared in the twinkling of an eye in a labyrinth of woods, copses, lanes, and gorges, of which every secret was familiar to them."¹ The priests told them that those who were killed would rise again in three days from the dead, a theory that not unnaturally made them indifferent to a loss of life of so temporary a character. Three priests were hidden for a time, and it was given out that they had been guillotined by

¹ *Histoire de la Révolution*, vol. ii, p. 381.

the Republicans. They reappeared, and round their necks was a crimson ring marking the shearing cut of the fatal knife. Who could doubt they had risen from the dead, and that their faithful peasants should equally rise in their turn? A thin cord, drawn tightly round the neck, had made the ring which proved the terrible fate they had undergone; but how could the simple peasantry guess the fraud?¹ In this wild war women bore a part. Madame de la Rochefoucauld—her husband had fled the country—organised a Royalist committee, led the peasants to battle, executed Republicans without mercy, seized the property of all who remained loyal to the Republic, and in the midst of all arranged brilliant *fêtes* for the amusement of Charette, the Vendean chief. Taken prisoner, with a Vendean farmer devoted to her, she perished on the scaffold. Marie Antoinette Adams—the Chevalier Adams, as the admiring peasants called her—threw herself also into the combat, and taken, in her turn, prisoner, she was paid the compliment of being shot as a soldier. The most frightful massacres were perpetrated, and a priest named Priou left the church where he was to say mass in order that he might celebrate it on an altar raised at a spot where some Republican prisoners were being murdered, his priestly garments training in human blood as he celebrated the Christian sacrifice.² Orders came

¹ *Mémoires Manuscrite de Mercier de Rohn*, p. 136, quoted by Louis Blanc.

² *Histoire de la Révolution*, Louis Blanc, vol. ii, p. 382.

direct from heaven in the shape of little notes inserted ingeniously into the statues of the virgin. The rebels styled themselves: "The Catholic and Royal armies of Bas Anjou and Poitou,¹ fighting for the re-establishment of the Christian faith and the French monarchy." To crown their treachery to France, they sent appeals for help to England, praying for arms and even for English soldiers, to fight against their own brethren. By the beginning of May the insurrection counted seven distinct armies: one of 20,000 men under De la Rochejaquelin, a fiery youth of 21, and others; a second under Bonchamps; a third of 12,000 men under De Royrand; a fourth of 3,000 to 4,000 under De Lyrot; three others respectively commanded by De la Cathelinière, De Joly, and Charette. The insurrection completed the fiery ring that now encircled France without a break. The army of the north and north-east had been beaten back; those of the Rhine and the Moselle were retreating; those on the Swiss and Italian frontiers were awaiting attack, while on the south-east the forces of the Republic were without officers, without munitions of war, without food, and on the south Spain was attacking Bayonne. Through the whole of this terrible May, 1793, the struggle for very life raged

¹ The title of the armies was taken from the old Royal provinces of France. The Constituent Assembly had, in 1790, divided France into 83 departments, abolishing the previous system of provinces (see p. 145).

up and down, and every fresh defeat wrung from Paris a cry of wrath, but never a one of weakness or despair.

As though to add the last crushing burden, France found herself flooded with false *assignats*, i.e., with forgeries of the paper notes issued by the Convention. It appears that in the month of February, 1793, a Scotchman named William Playfair had issued a pamphlet entitled: "General View of the Resources of France"; this pamphlet, says its author, "met with a pretty general approbation," and on March 20th, Mr. Playfair proposed "a fabrication of false *assignats* on an immense scale," arguing that the most efficacious way of attacking the French people would be by destroying its credit by the forging of *assignats*. His plan, according to his own account, was to forge one hundred millions of *assignats*, and to scatter them over France "by all possible means".¹ It seems scarcely credible that a project so vile should have been listened to by the English Government. Unhappily the frantic hatred of French Republicanism trampled down all morality and all decency in its furious rush. The proof of the acceptance of Playfair's infamous suggestion is yielded by a trial which took place at the end of 1795, in the Court of King's Bench; it was brought by a Mr. Strongitharm against Mr. Lukyn, "for not paying a note of fifty pounds,

¹ See *Histoire de la Révolution*. Louis Blanc, vol. ii,

given for engraving a plate to imitate the French *assignats*". The details are curious. Mr. Caslon, the letter founder, was called as a witness, and he stated that "Lukyn gave him a copy of a French *assignat*, which was produced in court, and that *assignat*, he said, he delivered to the plaintiff to direct him in making his plates. The plaintiff at first refused to do it; but Lukyn said they were for the Duke of York's army, and that it was with the knowledge and approbation of the Secretary of State; that the plaintiff was perfectly safe in doing it, and that if he still entertained doubts, he might call on the Secretaries of State. This, he said, was confirmed by Colonel Smith, agent to the Duke of York. The witness believed the plates were very well done. Lukyn had immense numbers of these forged *assignats* printed off, and went abroad to sell them. In cross-examination he said, the plaintiff certainly refused to make these plates till he was told the Government of this country thought it was a good measure. Lord Kenyon said, if the plaintiff had forged these plates for the purpose of fraud, he was of opinion that it ought not to have been made the foundation of an action. But Mr. Caslon swore the contrary. If the plaintiff, in obedience to the higher powers, had made these plates for the Duke of York's army, that circumstance altered the case. There were certain laws, not to be transgressed by one nation, even when at war with another, as abstaining from poisoned arms, quarter in war, etc.

But his Lordship said, he did not know that it was contrary to the law of nations to distress its enemy in its finances. A verdict was obtained for the plaintiff of £ 264, including other bills of exchange, given for various plates of the same kind".¹

This irrefutable evidence proves the crime, and these most wicked forgeries were circulated through France during the years 1793 '94, '95, utterly destroying credit, and reducing the French notes to mere waste-paper.

While the agony of the Republic grew ever more bitter, the internecine struggles of Gironde and Montagne rent her day by day. It was clear that in Paris the Montagne was triumphant, although within the Convention itself the Girondins held their own. But feeling their weakness outside, they strove to remedy it by appealing to the country at large against the metropolis, and we find Rebecqui writing to Barbaroux: "The only way to save the Republic is to march on Paris the forty thousand men who are fighting against the rebels in La Vendée." Paris, hungry, furious, resolute, defiant, palpitating with wrath and with determination to be free, had grown impatient with the philosophic party, whose coolness seemed indifference to the passionate people; in the Montagne she found her own wrath, her own suspicion, her own wild reckless

¹ *Register of Occurrences*, for the year 1796, Saturday, January 16th. The *Register of Occurrences* was a weekly paper, and is full of the most curious information.

courage, and blind to all pity, deaf to all cries, she rushed furiously into the conflict, and trampled the life out of her noblest, because their pulses kept not time with the fever-throb of her own.

We need not delay on the virulent contest of the first half of May in the Convention itself, now sitting in the Tuileries. The speeches within were echoed in the Girondin and Jacobin papers without, and the keen pens widened the wounds made by the bitter tongues. On May 16th, Isnard was elected president of the Convention, and this success of the Gironde "was considered by the Montagne as a declaration of war, and by the Moderates themselves as a defiance. Isnard, a man extravagant in everything, had in his character the fire of his language. He was the exaggeration of the Gironde . . . Every day of the presidency of Isnard was marked by a storm, and ended in a catastrophe".¹

At last, on the 18th May, the Gironde determined to propose that the Parisian authorities should be deprived, that the Municipality should be replaced by the presidents of the sections, and that the *suppléants* of the Convention should meet at Bourges. (The *suppléants* were deputies elected to supply any accidental vacancies that might occur during the session of the Convention.) Guadet was charged with the duty of submitting this extraordinary plan to the Convention. It was a veritable *coup d'état*, but a *coup d'état*, to be successful,

¹ *History of the Girondists*, Lamartine, vol. ii, pp. 501, 502.

must not be discussed beforehand. Naturally there was a tumult of wrath, and Barère, with his cool head and subtle tact, replaced the proposal with another apparently friendly, in reality fatal to the Gironde; let us form, he said, "a commission of twelve, deputed to take all measures necessary to ensure public tranquillity." The twelve were chosen, and they were of the extreme Right; "the suspicion of royalism was written upon the greater part of these names in the eyes of the Montagne and of the people."¹

It was the throwing down of the gauntlet for the final contest. The Jacobin Commune of Paris and the Girondin Commission of Twelve stood face to face in deadly duel. On the 19th thirty-seven sections met at the Hotel de Ville; the Convention must be purged; the "twenty-two" must be seized; insurrection was the best answer to the menace of the Gironde. The Commission retorted by proposing the most rigorous measures of repression, and after a hot debate succeeded in passing them. Elated by its triumph it summoned before it Hébert, a high municipal officer (the famous editor of *Père Duchesne*), and arrested two communal superintendents of police. Hébert, after a dignified farewell to his brethren of the Commune, obeyed the order of the Commission, and after four hours of questioning he was thrown into the prison of the Abbaye (May 24th).

¹ *History of the Girondists*, Lamartine, vol. ii, p. 506.

On the following day, new ferment, new uproar. Hébert in prison; Hébert in danger. From every section in pour the citizens; Pache, the mayor, must betake himself to the Convention, and there, with deputies from the insulted Commune, must demand the immediate trial of Hébert, so that "you may restore to his functions a magistrate honoured for his civic virtue and his enlightened views. . . . Arbitrary arrests are for honest men but civic crowns". Is there none in the Convention that will now rise and plead for peace? None that will soothe the Commune from its wrath? Alas! Isnard is President; Isnard with glorious eloquence, indeed; but eloquence that, angry, cuts like a knife and stabs like a dagger. Isnard is on his feet, with prompt decisive gesture hushing down those whose words, mayhap, would have been for peace. "Listen," cries the fiery Girondin, "listen to the truths I tell you. France has entrusted to Paris the National representation. Let Paris respect it! . . . If one blow be struck thereat, I tell you in the name of the whole of France"—"No! no!" comes furiously from the benches of the Montagne. "Yes! yes! in the name of the whole of France!" is thundered back from the Gironde and the Plain. "I declare," the silvery passionate tones ring out over the tumult, "I declare that Paris will be annihilated!" New outburst; new fury of indignant wrath; Marat, Danton, half a hundred more are on their feet at once. But hark! again the clear voice

of the dauntless President: "They will search along the banks of the Seine to seek where once was Paris!" And this in Paris! and this in the very ears of the crowded galleries, full of Parisian listeners, too stunned, too horrified at the daring blasphemy to find one cry of repudiation or of wrath! Then the Commune of Paris answers back sternly to the fiery challenger: "The magistrates of the people, who come to demand at your hands the punishment of the guilty, have sworn to defend the safety of person and of property; they are worthy of the respect of the French nation." Slowly they turn and leave the Convention, full of dogged silent fury, back to the Paris, which Isnard has menaced with destruction. The threats of Isnard have been endorsed by the Girondins. It is a party of enemies, a party of traitors, whose watchword is: "Down with Paris!"¹

In very truth the Twelve appear to mean business. They will hunt down the traitors, so comes the report to the furious sections, "even on the Mountain itself". What means this threat? Is Marat again in danger, he whom they bore triumphantly back, and whom the Revolutionary Tribunal itself had declared to be spotless and pure? And what is this proposal that has reached our ears, this demand for an armed guard for the Convention? What guard can a patriotic Convention need beyond

¹ *Histoire de la Révolution*, Louis Blanc, vol. ii, pp. 401, 402.

its encircling patriots, patriots ready to die for it if it be true—and to kill it if it be traitor? And this other demand, that assemblies of sections shall close at ten? Close! Shall not citizens sit up all night, if so it please them, discussing all things in heaven and earth, and discussing chiefly a Convention that needs purging—aye, and shall have it, too, with but brief delay.

Alison, as good Tory and Churchman, thinks that the Commission "was going to work in a right spirit, for it proposed to establish an armed force, to counter-balance that of which the Jacobins and municipality had the disposal".¹

On the 26th May, Robespierre goes down, gloomy and thoughtful, to the Jacobin Club. His mind, cool, calculating, subtle, is made up, and his voice shall syllable the inarticulate menace growling on every hand. He rises to speak. Step by step he leads his hearers on. "I told you," he concludes, "that the people ought to repose upon their force, but when they are oppressed, when they have only themselves to look to, he is a coward who would not tell them to rise. It is when all laws are violated, when despotism is at its height, when good faith and modesty are trampled under foot, that the people ought to rise in insurrection. That moment has arrived. Our enemies openly oppress patriots; they wish in the name of the law to plunge the people once more into misery and slavery! Such

¹ *History of Europe*, Alison, vol. ii, p. 228.

corrupt men shall never call me friend. They may offer me treasures ; I prefer dying with Republicans to triumphing with wretches. I exhort every citizen, therefore, to preserve the sense of his rights. I urge him to reckon on his force, and on that of the whole nation. I urge the people to place themselves in insurrection against the corrupt deputies ; I declare that having received from the people the right of defending their rights, I regard him as my oppressor who interrupts me, who refuses me speech ; and I declare that I alone, I, place myself in insurrection against the President, against all the members who sit in the Convention. When they affect a contempt for the sans-culottes, I declare that I place myself in insurrection against all the corrupt deputies ; and I invite all the deputies of the Mountain to rally round me, and combat the aristocracy, and I say that there is for them but one alternative, either to resist with all their force the efforts of intrigue, or to give in their resignation." ¹

Little doubt of the answer of the Jacobin Club to the harangue of their leader. "We are all in insurrection !" rang round the hall, and quickly the formidable cry became a fact. "The leaders of the Commune re-united, and took the name of the Central Club, or the Republican Union. They decided that they would summon the Commune to rise in revolt, to call to them the armed force, and

¹ *Life of Robespierre*, G. H. Lewes, p. 296.

to close the barriers of Paris until the Convention had done justice to the people. Henriot, named general-commandant in place of Santerre, answered them by their bayonets."¹

Meanwhile, the Girondists have not been idle. The Twelve have summoned to their defence three sections of Paris, devoted to the party of the Gironde. Marat, on the morning of this fatal 27th, rises and reads a proposition that the Twelve shall be suppressed; deputies from the section of the Cité appear, and demand that their president and their secretary, arrested suddenly during the night, shall be set free. Isnard answers disdainfully, and somewhat inappropriately, considering his own youth and the ripe manhood of the petitioners: "Citizens, the National Convention pardons to your youth . . ." Murmurs, interruptions, and Robespierre, mindful of his resolve, is seen through the tumult approaching the tribune; Isnard, carried away by excitement, informed probably of the speech of Robespierre on the previous evening, sharply and imperiously forbids the popular deputy to speak. "You are a tyrant," shouts Marat. "We are oppressed," cry the deputies of the Montagne, "let us resist." "Tyrants, to the Abbaye! to the Abbaye!" It is a fury of cries, of gestures. Vergniaud hotly demands an appeal to the people. In the midst of the tumult, Isnard puts it to the vote whether Robespierre shall be heard

¹ *History of the Girondists*, Lamartine, vol. ii, p. 515.

or not, and declares that the vote is carried against the Jacobin leader. Then Danton springs to his feet, and the voice of thunder rolls over the assembly, silencing the tumult: "I declare that the refusal of speech to Robespierre is a base tyranny. The Commission of Twelve turns the arms you place in their hands against the best citizens. The French people shall judge." Isnard has in his hand a paper which he is evidently going to read: is it that answer to the petition which may precipitate a conflict? Bazire rushes towards the president crying: "I will wrest from his hand the signal of civil war, which is written in his response to the petitioners." He is on the steps leading to the presidential chair, when some Girondin deputies fling themselves between Isnard and the fiery Montagne deputy. But hark! what is the tramp outside? It is the armed force summoned by the Gironde; the three sections with artillery and weapons of war are ranging themselves round the Tuileries. It is five in the afternoon when this army of the Gironde arrives. And now, from every side stream in the people. The multitude grows and grows, and presses more and more closely round the guard. Murmurs are heard. Then louder the menace comes. At last rings over the angry, indignant crowd: "Death to the Girondins!" Guards? aye, but the steady pressure of a multitude knows and feels no resistance of a ring of armed men. The deadweight of a mighty crowd

bears all before it. And onward the crowd presses. Through court and up staircase, unarmed, steady, menacing, like Death itself. In the Convention, Mayor Pache is present, and Garat, the Minister of the Interior. Garat, quiet, patient, a little scornful at unnecessary precautions which provoke attack, pours oil on the troubled waters. The people are friendly, he urges. If the Convention visit the spots where crowds are congregating, "the waves of the multitude will reverently open before it". "I attest to the Convention that it has not the slightest risk to run, and that each of you may retire in peace to his home. I take the responsibility on my head." This is encouraging, even admirable. But these crowds? These crowds that are now on our threshold? These crowds that are overflowing into our very hall? Garat may answer for them. Pache may attest their patriotism. But for a troubled Gironde, tossed on waves of doubt and wrath and fear, how shall it meet this menacing flood, which looks so stormy, harmless as it may be styled by a Minister of the Interior, and by a by-no-means-to-be-trusted Jacobin mayor? Who can tell how the troubled current of events might have turned, if the Girondins, with their intellect and purity, the philosophers, the Atheists of the Revolution, if they had had the statesman's tact, the hero's courage, to win, to awe, to guide! These they had not. Courage to die, aye, yes! But courage to stand firm and dauntless, too strong to break

into foolish menace, too strong to run into wild extremes now of yielding, now of defiance, this they had not. To face this turbulent passionate mob; to understand its right aims and its ignorant methods; its noble yearnings and its mad passions; its height of self-devotion and its baseness of suspicion; this the Gironde could not do. To make a Revolution, this was within the reach of Vergniaud's exquisite eloquence, of Isnard's fiery enthusiasm, of Brissot's earnest labour; this was the Gironde's power, and shall be the Gironde's eternal fame. But to rule and to guide the Revolution triumphant, to be patient with the Marats and the Henriots, the awful relics of the past, to seize with swift insight and strong grasp the righteous aim beneath the swirl and torrent of transitory evil, this was work for which the Girondins were wholly unfitted, and they were swept away in the wild stream they could not stem. The Montagne had at its service Robespierre's subtle statecraft, Danton's mighty strength, Marat's unscrupulous will; aye, and with all its faults, it was penetrated with Rousseau's lofty ideals and with quenchless faith in human brotherhood, and in the glory that is Man, not priest, nor peer, nor king. The Gironde could have built a Republic to-day, but with the feudalism, the Church, the monarchy of France behind it, with the ignorance, the pauperism, the madness of revenge around it, the task yesterday was too vast for human strength. Alas! there are cancers that only the

surgeon's knife may cut away, and I fear me that nothing less than the surgery of the Montagne could have made impossible for ever the return of that cancer of feudalism, which had been eating away the very life of Royalist France.

The Parisians crowd the hall of the Convention; Isnard has disappeared from the chair; by force? by his own action? who can say? Hérault de Séchelles is in his place, with some fleeting shadow of a Fonfrède in between. The Girondins have vanished; the crowding people fill their vacant seats. "Hébert! give us back Hébert!" cries the orator deputed by twenty-eight sections of Paris. "We groan under the yoke of a despotic committee, as erst under that of a tyrant. Render us true Republicans. Deliver us from a tyrannical commission, and may the existing Assembly" . . . "Resistance to oppression," says the president, "is as sacred as hatred for tyrants in the human heart. Representatives of the people, we promise you justice, and we will give it you." Frantic applause breaks in on the orator's speech: "When the rights of man are violated," he cries, "we must declare for reparation or death!"

The vote comes swiftly, passionately, from the deputies of the Montagne, from the crowds of the Parisians that cover the empty benches of the Gironde. Liberty to Hébert, Varlet and their colleagues. Suppression of the Commission of

Twelve. Triumph of the Commune and the Montagne. At the midnight of that stormy 27th May, the long session is raised, the crowds disperse. And listen ! here and there you may hear a cry from the scattering groups in the far-off streets : *Vive la Montagne !* and again : *Mort aux vingt-deux !* (Live the Montagne. Death to the twenty-two.)¹

On the following day, the scattered forces of the Girondin were regathered ; for the last time dominating the Convention, they re-established the Commission of Twelve, dissolved the night before. The news flew through Paris, reawakening wrath, and thirty-six of the forty-eight sections, represented by some five hundred deputies, gathered at the Evêché, the central club. A Commission of Six was formed to lead the movement against the Girondins. Robespierre, appealed to by the Jacobins, would take no part as leader. "I am worn out by four years of revolution," he said wearily, and he threw on the Commune the duty of guiding the people. To touch the representatives of France with violence was to him so great an evil, that he shrank from sharing the responsibility of such an act. Danton, friendly at heart to the Gironde, who would have none of his friendship, stood aside neutral in the final conflict. Marat remained, Marat who shared neither the scruples of Robespierre, nor the generosity of Danton ; Marat who had his own

¹ *History of the Girondists*, Lamartine, vol. ii, pp. 519, 520.

arrest to punish and to avenge ; Marat whose hour had now fully come.¹

The 80th passed over in the same uneasiness, the uneasiness that preludes the bursting of a storm. On the morrow, at three o'clock, in the darkness ere the dawn, the tocsin rings out from Notre Dame, and wakes Paris to a new insurrection. The streets fill. The air is full of murmurs. The commissioners from the Evêché go to the Commune, announce its dissolution by authority of the people, and then clothe it afresh with authority as the Revolutionary Council General of the Commune of Paris. Henriot is named provisional general of the army of Paris, Pache is reappointed mayor, the National Guard pours in from every section, the alarm gun booms out its cry of warning and of summons, the insurrection is complete. Meanwhile the Convention has met, Danton is urging that the Commission of Twelve shall be dissolved, and that the people shall be met with conciliation : "Hasten to satisfy them," he pleads, eager to prevent a conflict ; "save them from the aristocrats ; save them from their own anger."² But see, into the hall of the Convention are pouring the crowds of the insurrection. Who has rung the tocsin ? Who has summoned Paris to the streets ? Robespierre the younger is on his feet : "You would know who has sounded the

¹ *Histoire de la Révolution*, Louis Blanc, vol. ii, p. 415.

² *History of Europe*, Alison, vol. ii, p. 227.

toesin ? It is the treason of our generals, the perfidy that surrendered the camp at Famars, the bombardment of Valenciennes, the disorder in the army of the north, the conspirators at home, of whom some are here !"¹ A deputation claims speech, and presents a petition demanding vengeance against the calumniators of Paris, the arrest of Lebrun and Clavière, Girondin ministers, and turning to the Montagne, the speaker cries : " Delegates of the people, who have not betrayed its cause, yield the intriguing conspirators to the sword of justice ! " L'Huillier, procureur general, is in the tribune. It is the Girondins who foment divisions ; the Girondins who have instigated the Vendean massacres ; the Girondins who hate Paris, and who invent imaginary conspiracies in order to cover real ones ; Isnard has menaced Paris with annihilation ; Brissot, Guadet, Vergniaud, Gensonné, Buzot, Barbaroux, Roland, Clavière, all these are the enemies of Paris, and would incite the departments to conflict with the capital. And see how the hall is becoming crowded, and how the war-note of the orator is echoed from every side. Vergniaud has made one gallant attempt to turn aside the conflict ; " let us join the people outside," he cries, and leaves, hoping the Convention will follow him. Scarcely a deputy joins him, and when he returns amid jeers and mocking laughter, humiliated and in despair, Robespierre is in the tribune, and, silent, the crowd

¹ *Histoire de la Révolution*, Louis Blanc, vol. ii, p. 420.

listens to his words ; bitter insinuations, dangerous allusions, are falling from his lips ; Vergniaud, worn out, impatient for the catastrophe now inevitable, cries out : " Conclude, conclude ! " " Yes, I will conclude," retorts Robespierre, gazing down from the tribune on his foe. " I will conclude, and against you ! Against you, who after the revolution of the 10th August, tried to drive to the scaffold those who had made it ; against you, who have striven to bring about the destruction of Paris ; against you, who would have saved the tyrant ; against you, who conspired with Dumouriez ; against you, who pursued with bitterness the patriots whom he endeavoured to destroy ; against you, who have provoked these cries of indignation, which you now allege as the crime of your victims. My conclusion ! it is a decree of accusation against the accomplices of Dumouriez, and against those who have been designated by the petitioners ! " ' "

The Gironde was crushed. Vergniaud, its ablest orator, had no word of resistance to offer. The sitting ended with the final suppression of the Twelve, the strengthening of the Committee of Public Safety, and then the tumultuous joy of the crowds over their victory, and a procession in which the Girondins, prisoners at the wheels of a popular triumph, took part. " Which do you prefer," said Fonfrède to Vergniaud, " this ovation, or the scaffold." " It matters not to me," was the profound

¹ *Histoire de la Révolution*, Louis Blanc, vol. ii, p. 422.

answer ; " there is no difference between this march and the scaffold ; the one is the road to the other."

And even as he was speaking his friend Madame Roland, the heroine of the earlier Revolution, was walking along the same road. When her husband had been denounced, she had found for him an asylum, where one, but one only, could rest in safety, and then walking back alone through the illuminated streets she learned the fall of the Gironde. In that fall she saw her own fate, and hastening home she prepared for her coming doom. She was sleeping when the summons came, and awakened to meet the order of arrest she rose, dressed quietly, and walked into her drawing-room to meet the messengers of the Commune. The dawn was breaking ; she stood there, strong and beautiful, her weeping daughter, her weeping servants, clinging round her, she only brave and calm. " How much you are beloved !" said the leader of the arresting party, gazing troubled at the scene of woe. " Because I love," she answered, gently. As they passed in a carriage through the crowd, shouting, alas ! " To the guillotine !" the commissary asked if she wished the window to be drawn up. " No," she answered, " oppressed innocence should not assume the attitude of crime and shame. I do not fear the looks of honest men, and I brave those of my enemies." " You have much more resolution than many men," said the commissioner. " You calmly

await justice." "Justice!" she replied; "If there were justice, I should not be here. I shall go to the scaffold as fearlessly as I go to prison. I despise life." "The doors of a prison closed on her," says Lamartine, "and all the virtues, the faults, the hopes, repentance, and heroism of her party seemed to enter the dungeon with her."¹ It was the fitting epilogue of the tragedy played on that fatal 31st of May, 1793.

¹ *History of the Girondins*, vol. iii, p. 26.

LECTURE IX

TO THE DEATH OF MARAT

ON the morning of June 1st, there seemed a chance that the trouble might end without bloodshed, the people contented with their triumph, the power of the Gironde crushed. But Marat, unpitiable, resolute, would leave no chance of life to the broken party. It is five o'clock in the afternoon, and he is at the Hotel de Ville. "Rise, sovereign people," he cried, "and go to the Convention. Read your address, and leave not till you have obtained a definite answer." And rushing from the room, he climbed the belfry, and with his own hands set the tocsin ringing once more. Eighteen commissioners are chosen to carry the demand of the Commune to the Convention, and in order that the siege may be complete, carts of provisions are loaded and accompany the National Guard to the Tuileries. While these preparations are being made the Girondins are taking their last supper together; the tocsin clanging through the air is the music of that funeral feast. The mother of Barbaroux is there, broken-hearted. The hair of Louvet's wife turns white in

those hours of agony. "Let us drink to life or death," says Vergniaud to Pétion; "this night conceals in its shades the one or the other; let us think not of ourselves but of the Fatherland. Were this wine my blood, I would drink it to the safety of the Republic." *Vive la République*, was the solemn answer, and they drank the toast to that cry together for the last time.

On that same evening Hassenfratz read at the bar of the Convention the demand of the Commune, containing a list of twenty-seven Girondin names, marked as guilty, and the Committee of Public Safety was directed to report on the petition within three days.

The Committee met, and after long discussion, Garat threw out a hint swiftly acted on by Danton: "Remember," said Garat, "the quarrels of Themistocles and Aristides, which menaced their country with ruin by dividing it into two opposing factions. Aristides saved his country by the greatness of his soul. 'Athenians,' he said to the people who were wavering between himself and his rival, 'you will never be happy and tranquil until you have flung Themistocles and myself into the gulf whereinto you fling your criminals.'" The keen generous heart of Danton caught the suggestion ere Garat had concluded. "You are right," he cried, "the unity of the Republic must, if necessary, be built on our dead bodies. We and our enemies must exile ourselves from the Convention in equal

numbers, and thus restore to it strength and peace. I will go and propose it to our heroic friends of the Montagne, and I myself will depart as a hostage to Bordeaux." The gallant self-devotion was much applauded, but little imitated. Robespierre point blank refused to join in the sacrifice: "My reason does not permit me to abdicate," he answered; "not my power, for I have none, but the mandate of the people which has placed me at this post, at which I wish to die. It is not a question of persons, but of ideas. My ideas are those of the people, and I have no right to abdicate. Let them take my head if they will. Besides, this gulf of Aristides is only a sublime sophism. Either Aristides believes that he is noxious to his country, and in that case he ought to precipitate himself into the gulf; or he believes that he can save it, and in that case he ought to precipitate his enemies into it. That is logic. The heroism of Danton is only the tenderness of a weak heart, which surrenders the Revolution to a tear."

There remained only the hope that the menaced deputies might be induced to resign, a hope which, as we shall see, was for the most part rejected by their courage, their feeling of duty, and their pride. Meanwhile the Convention was sitting, surrounded by some 80,000 armed men, resolute to remain there till their demand had been conceded. The order of the day was proceeded with, as tranquilly as though there were nothing in the air, but the order of the

day was of a most melancholy description. Tidings from La Vendée, announcing new defeats, new calamities; tidings from Bretagne, Finisterre, Cantal, recounting successes of the rebels; addresses from the army of the Rhine, demanding justice on traitors; and to crown the horrors, at Lyons a massacre of 800 patriots, announced by a messenger from the town, who cried: "At Lyons 800 patriots have been murdered; the aristocracy there is marching over the bleeding corpses of the friends of liberty!" As this melancholy news strikes the deputies into silence, a deputation arrives from the Commune, and voices from the Montagne demand its immediate admission. Lanjuinais springs to the tribune. Lanjuinais is a young Royalist, a Catholic, bestowing no love on the Gironde, but hating far more bitterly the Montagne; chivalrous and gallant, throwing himself ever on the weaker side, he champions the Gironde in its peril and shares its melancholy fate. With lance in rest he charges straight at the Commune, and declares that for three days no freedom of speech has been possible in the Convention; "a rival power commands and surrounds you, within by its hired tools, without by its cannons." Anarchy each day . . . He is interrupted: "You calumniate Paris!" "You are an impostor!" "You conspire on the very Tribune." But Lanjuinais is by no means to be howled down: "Not only does a usurping assembly exist and deliberate, but it acts, it conspires. It

kept the tocsin pealing yesterday till eleven o'clock at night, and has set it ringing again to-day . . . The provisional commander named by an illegal authority continues in his office and issues his orders. They are bringing us again a petition dragged through all the mud of the Paris streets." Again the cries break out: "You calumniate Paris. You insult the people, even in their right of petition." And then Legendre, a Montagnard deputy who chances to have been a butcher, rushes forward up the steps of the Tribune, raising his mighty arm to threaten the outspoken orator; "Down, or I kill you." "Pass first a decree, Legendre, to transform me into an ox," says Lanjuinais with smiling bitter gibe, "you can then pole-axe me."¹ There is a rush at the tribune, pistols are seen in the air, daggers are drawn, Lanjuinais clings to the railings, and all efforts to dislodge him fail; at length the President obtains order, and Lanjuinais concludes by a demand that the Commune shall be suppressed.

While this tumult is going on, the petitioners are waiting outside, and they are now admitted. "Delegates of the people," says their spokesman, "the citizens of Paris have now been under arms for three days. Its representatives, from whom it has ceaselessly claimed its rights, so shamefully violated, scoff at its calmness and its perseverance.

¹ *Histoire de la Terreur*, Mortimer-Ternaux, vol. vii, pp. 384-386.

The torch of liberty is smouldering ; the columns of equality are tottering ; the anti-revolutionists are raising their heads. Let them tremble ! The thunder is growling ; it will soon pulverise them. Representatives, the crimes of the factions in the Convention are known to you ; we come to denounce them for the last time. Decree at once that they are unworthy of the trust of the nation ; place them unto provisional arrest. We will answer to their constituents with our heads. The people are weary of seeing you delay their happiness ; it is still within your hands. Save it, or they will save it themselves ! ”¹

But the Convention refuses to do more than remit, this petition also to the Committee of Public Safety, and the angry petitioners, with loud cries of "To Arms : save the country," go to swell the huge armed crowd outside the hall.

Richon, a member of the Plain, suggests timidly that it would be wise to arrest the twenty-two provisionally, and so save further quarrel ; indignant protest from the whole Right, rising to their feet as one man : "We will all go with them." Fresh debate, fresh contest ; at last the Committee are bidden to report at once, which they do incontinently by the mouth of Barère, and invite the twenty-two to suspend themselves, and so relieve their colleagues from the choice between the disregard of

¹ *Histoire de la Terreur*, Mortimer-Ternaux, vol. vii, pp. 387, 388.

the inviolability of the deputies and the peril of a conflict with the nation. There is silence in the Hall. Then Isnard is seen advancing to the tribune, and his voice, firm and sad, but without its fire, falls on the stillness. "When a man and the fatherland are both placed in the scales, I lean to the fatherland. If my blood were needed to save the country, I would carry my own head to the scaffold; I would await no executioner. The Committee of Public Safety reports to you that the suspension of the deputies named is the only measure which can avert the terrible evils by which we are threatened. Good. I suspend myself, and I ask no other safeguard than that of the people, for whom I have ever sacrificed myself. Let none think I am playing a coward's part. I think I have proved my courage up to this time; and I believe that this, my last act, is worthy of a representative of the people."

He is followed by Lanthenas, by Fauchet, by Dussaulx, who, each in his turn, lay down their offices. Not so, however, will Barbaroux do; no demission of himself will he make. "If my blood," he cries, "were necessary to the establishing of liberty, I would pray that it should be outpoured. If the sacrifice of my honour were needed for the same cause, I would answer: Take it from me, posterity shall be my judge. Nay, if the Convention deem the suspension of our powers necessary, I will bow to its decree. But how can I of myself lay down powers with which the people have invested

me? How can I believe myself to be suspected when I receive from my own department, from thirty others, and from more than a hundred popular societies testimonies of confidence, testimonies which console me for the bitterness that each day here puts to my lips. No! expect from me no submission. I have sworn to die at my post, I will keep my oath."

Lanjuinais follows Barbaroux, and, interrupted by insults from the Montagne and the spectators: "Of old," he said, "they led the victims to the altars, decked with wreaths and garlands. But the priests that slew did not insult the victims." Finally, after a last eloquent plea that all power, that dared to challenge the supreme authority of the nation as expressed in the National Convention, should be broken, he too speaks his last words: "I see civil war burst into flame in my country, spread ravaging in every direction and desolate France. I see the horrible monster of dictatorship advancing over the heaps of ruins and of corpses, swallowing you successively one after the other, and overturning the Republic!"¹

While this long contest has been proceeding, Henriot has completed all his arrangements; no deputy is allowed to leave the building, and several come into the hall indignant, complaining that they have been violently repulsed when attempting

¹ *Histoire de la Terreur*, Mortimer-Ternaux, vol. vii, see pp. 399-403.

to pass over the threshold. Dussaulx has been struck. The shirt of Boissy d'Anglas is in ribbons. Henriot is sent for to the bar, but sends rude message back that he will not come. Hérault de Séchelles is presiding: the Convention, whilom so noisy, is now silent, uneasy, anxious. At last Barère proposes that the whole Assembly shall quit the Hall together, and march out among the people. Strange scene that follows! Out of the door of the Hall, its president at its head, slowly defiles the once mighty Convention, out into the court, and faces the crowd, which imprisons it. The Maratists alone remain behind in the hall.¹ Bareheaded they march out to see armed men stretch as far as the eye can reach, and drawn up in front cannon face them on their issue. At the entrance of the Carrousel Henriot is sitting on horseback, and Hérault de Séchelles approaching him reads aloud a decree commanding the forces to retire. "Henriot, I summon you to obey." "I only know my orders." "What does the people ask? The Convention is occupied but with their happiness." "Hérault, we know you as a good patriot; you are of the Montagne. Will you answer with your head that the twenty-two deputies shall be given up within twenty-four hours?"—"No."—"The people has not risen to listen to fine phrases, but to issue sovereign orders."—"In the name of the nation and the law, soldiers, arrest this rebel!"

¹ *Histoire de la Révolution*, Louis Blanc, vol. ii, p. 429.

—"You have no orders to give. Return to your post, and deliver up the deputies that the people demand." A cry rises from the ranks of the Convention. "Will you have victims? kill us all!" "Cannoneers, to your pieces!" roars Henriot, a man apparently who does not mince his phrases, and who has the advantage of knowing exactly what he wants.

At this much scuttling backwards, much beating of hasty retreat, and a baffled, beaten, humiliated Convention goes back to its hall, Marat having appeared and sharply ordered it to return "to the post, so basely deserted". The Convention has fallen before the Commune, and it is not on the French Revolution, but on the Commune of Paris, that must fall the condemnation of history for the bloody story of the next fourteen months.

The first act of our helpless Convention was to order the arrest of the twenty-two; from the twenty-seven that had once been demanded, Marat struck out the names of Ducos, Dussaulx and Lanthenas, while those of Saint Martin and Fonfrède were erased on the suggestion of Legendre. The list, as complete, ran as follows: Gensonné, Guadet, Brisot, Gorsas, Pétion, Vergniaud, Salles, Barbaroux, Chambon, Buxot, Biroteau, Lidon, Rabaud-Saint-Etienne, Lasource, Lanjuinais, Grangeneuve, Lehardy, Lesage, Louvet, Valazé, Clavière, and Lebrun. Isnard and Fauchet, as they had resigned, were not arrested, but were forbidden to leave Paris. Nine other names were added, from

the ill-starred Committee of Twelve; of the three left, one was a Girondin, belonging to the twenty-two, while the two others were Fonfrède and Saint Martin. It is eleven o'clock at night. The weary and disheartened deputies ask to be allowed to leave. The order to raise the siege comes from the Commune, the doors are opened, and the deputies are free to go, save those twenty-two and nine who are in "state of arrestation," and who are finally allowed to go to their own homes in charge of officers of the communal police. And so closed round Paris the night of June 2nd, 1793, the last of the three days' battle, which ended in the total and irremediable defeat of the Gironde. The tragedy of their fate is not yet complete, but the hour of their rule in Paris has passed away for ever. The struggle will for a while be transferred to the departments, and the agony will be prolonged. But Paris will no more be thrilled with Girondin eloquence and Girondin genius. The curtain falls there, on the scene of their arrest, to rise again on that of the guillotine.

One curious fact must not escape mention. Having at last driven the Girondins from the Convention, Marat himself quitted it, declaring on June 3rd that he would not re-enter it as a deputy until the "traitors," the "conspirators," had been judged. "All his activity then concentrated itself in the point of his pen; never had he written so much. By every method open to him in his journal, he pressed for the trial of the arrested members.

But when most of the Girondins had fled, Marat regarded himself as released from his oath, and returned to the Convention, where he took part in the discussion on some of the articles of the Constitution of '93." ¹

This month of June is spent in feverish activity by some of our Girondins, by others in fatalist patience. Vergniaud, Gensonné, Valazé, Fonfrède, and a few others remain quietly under arrest at Paris. Others—such as Pétion, Barbaroux, Buzot, Guadet, Louvet—rush westwards, southwards, northwards, appealing with tongues of fire to their countrymen to rise and save France from the tyranny of the Commune of Paris. The rendezvous is at Caen, and hither some twenty-seven Girondin deputies are gathered in the latter end of June. Here establishes itself a fleeting "Central Assembly of resistance to oppression," and hence is issued a short-lived journal, the *Bulletin de Caen*, full of news the most encouraging of the popular sympathy through non-Parisian France. But since Paris just now *is* France, palpitating with all that is most revolutionary, most invasion-defying, most resolute to live free or die unchained, small good, O Girondins that could not ride this storm, will come to you from your sixty, nay even from your boasted seventy departments. The Girondins have a general also, if not yet an army, one Felix Wimpfen, an unwise choice, much blamed by Louvet; for

¹ *Histoire des Journaux*, p. 523.

Wimpfen is a Royalist, and since some unavowed sympathy with royalty has been alleged against the Girondin party, sore lack of wisdom is there in this choice of a commander-in-chief.

From this Central Assembly of Caen is issued to France a violent proclamation, recalling all the crimes alleged against the Montagne by its foes, and threatening its deputies, some of them by name; this remarkable document concludes as follows: "Unhappy Parisians, noble Parisians, we come to strike down the municipal tyrants, to break your chains, to embrace you . . . Thou, Pache, and all belonging to thee, thy municipal officers, thy shoemakers, thy revolutionary women, all, all of you shall answer to us with your heads, not only for any movement which may determine the assassination of the captive representatives, but for every kind of accident that may, seemingly with less violence, put an end to their lives." ¹

Such message, perhaps, was not the wisest to send to Paris, irritated and desperate as she then was. Paris most certainly did not regard herself as in chains, nor did she ask any deliverance at the hands of Caen. It was but oil thrown on the flames of her wrath, which leapt the higher as the threats grew louder. Paris that had not bowed her proud head before the advance of Europe in arms; Paris that, guarding the Fatherland from the foreigner, had yet men and money to send to strike at a revolt

¹ *Histoire de la Révolution*, Louis Blanc, vol. ii, p. 438.

in her rear; Paris that rose the more desperately brave the more cruelly she was wounded, this Paris was scarcely likely to bow to the mandate of the fugitive deputies of the Gironde. The only result of the agitation carried on in the provinces was to steel every Parisian heart against the Girondins, to make the name of Gironde in Parisian ears a synonym for traitor, and to smooth the road down which should roll the tumbril carrying them to the guillotine. "These departmental forces that they are directing on Paris, are they not needed on the Pyrenees to repulse the Spaniards; in La Vendée to fight against La Rochejaquelin and Lescure?"¹

The immediate result of the movement was a proposal to take into stricter custody the deputies who had not escaped from Paris, and Robespierre, on June 24th, supporting this proposition made in the Convention by Amar, broke out into hot declamation against Ducos who opposed it: "What! there are still men who pretend to be ignorant of facts known to the whole of France? What! at the very moment that the brigands of La Vendée are ravaging the departments, that the audacity of their accomplices is awakening in our midst, and that we hear within this very circle the cry of revolt! . . . What! will you put on a level this National Convention and a handful of conspirators?"²

¹ *Histoire de la Révolution*, Louis Blanc, vol. ii, p. 439.

² *Ibid.*, p. 440.

Meanwhile an army had been gathered by the Girondins, and was preparing to set out for Paris. Fortunately the Royalist conspirators, believing that they had won the adhesion of the Gironde, showed their objects too distinctly for mistake to be possible; the Gironde love of the Republic was startled, and their whole passionate loyalty to freedom sprang up in alarm and wrath; the army melted away as swiftly as it had arisen; a small force advancing from Paris found no enemy to fight; Wimpfen called a meeting of the deputies, and declared to them that the only safety lay in "negotiating with England. I have means to do so, but I must have your authority and your pledges". They negotiate with the foreigner! the Gironde stab the Republic with a dagger borrowed from Pitt! they rebuild the Throne they had broken, and forge again the chain of Royalty to bind the fair free limbs of France! Rather the scaffold and the guillotine! rather the triumph of the Montagne than that of the King! Out of this tumult of insurrection, out of this network of intrigue, out of these coils of the subtle Royalists who have blinded their eyes and used them as their tools; back to their old nobility and truth, back to their old faith, hidden awhile in mists and darkness, but not, oh not, really sullied, back comes the Gironde, indignant at its blunder, remorseful at what had almost been a crime, and it sets its feet in the path that leads to the guillotine, rather than in that which leads to

safety through the gate of treason to Republican France.

In the midst of this awful turmoil, the Convention is discussing, aye and passing, the Constitution. The Atheistic party had been expelled from the Convention, and the project adopted was that of Robespierre rather than of Condorcet. "All that is good in the second project," said Condorcet, "is copied from the first; they have only perverted and corrupted that which they tried to correct." Robespierre, rejecting the God "which the Inquisition had adored by the glare of stakes, with their knees resting in blood," clung to the idea of a Supreme Being, and with the Jacobins as a party believed that "the intervention of an active and just power was necessary wherever there were the weak to protect, the poor to feed, the unhappy to save, not only from oppression but from abandonment".¹ "How different," cried Robespierre, "is the God of nature from the God of the priests. I know of nothing which so much resembles Atheism as the religions they (priests) have made. By disfiguring the Supreme Being, they have annihilated him in themselves. They have made him a globe of fire, a bull, a tree, a man, a king. Priests have created God in their own image; they have made him jealous, capricious, greedy, cruel, implacable . . . The true priest of the Supreme Being is nature; his temple is the

¹ *Histoire de la Révolution*, Louis Blanc, vol. ii, p. 454.

universe ; his service is virtue ; his festivals are the rejoicings of a mighty nation assembled beneath his eyes to knit the bonds of universal fraternity. Priest ! by what title have you proved your mission ? The sceptre and the censer have conspired to dishonour heaven and to usurp earth."¹

Carrying out this view, accepted by the Jacobin party, we find in the preamble of the Constitution of 1793 : " In the presence and under the auspices of the Supreme Being, the French people declares," etc. Yet in the face of this, ignorant people assert that Robespierre was an Atheist, and the Reign of Terror, through which he ruled, the fruit of Atheism !

The Constitution, while containing much that was impracticable and crude, also contained much that was noble and grand. It says : " The Constitution guarantees to every Frenchman equality, liberty, safety, prosperity, free exercise of religion, education in common, public assistance, unlimited freedom of the press, the right of petition, and of forming public associations." " Liberty consists in doing all which does not infringe on the rights of others. Justice is its law." It gave universal suffrage, and formed primary electoral district and departmental assemblies ; the number of ministers was fixed at 24, and from the list of candidates elected, one by each departmental assembly, the house of representatives had to choose the executive (Arts. 62, 66, and 80).

¹ *Histoire de la Révolution*, Louis Blanc, vol. ii, pp. 446, 447.

On the 28rd June this famous Constitution of 1793 was voted in the National Convention. Congratulatory deputations filed through the hall, joy and satisfaction were seen on every face. Paris! most antithetic, surely, of all the cities in the world. The flowers of her garlands are cut with a dagger, and the white robes of her rejoicings are soiled with the damp folds of the crape of her executions.

On the 8th July, Saint-Just, a prominent deputy of the Montagne, mounted the tribune of the Convention, to bring up a report on the Girondins. He put sharply and keenly the Montagnard accusation against them, but concluded by saying: "Be things as they may, liberty will not be terrible to those she has disarmed. Proscribe those who fled to take up arms; their flight shows how little rigorous was their detention. Proscribe them, not for what they said, but for what they did. Try the rest, and pardon the greater number. Error should not be confounded with crime. It is time for the people to hope for happy days, and for liberty to be something more than party fury . . . I have drawn for you the conspiracy. Heaven grant that we have now seen the last storms of freedom! Free men are born for justice. Little profit is there in troubling the earth."¹

While these words of hope and of gentleness so unwonted are falling from the lips of Saint-Just, a girl, grey-eyed, firm-lipped, and tender-voiced, is

¹ *Histoire de la Révolution*, Louis Blanc, vol. ii, p. 466.

standing in a hall at Caen talking to young Barba-roux, and taking from his hands a letter of introduction to Deputy Duperret asking him to take her to Minister Garat at Paris. Pétion, passing by, smiles at her with not unkindly raillery: "Fair aristocrat, do you come to see Republicans?" Very quiet and self-contained is the answer: "You judge me to-day without knowing me, citizen Pétion. One day you will know who I am."

It is Charlotte Corday.

Charlotte Corday—or Marie Anne Charlotte de Corday d'Armont, in the days ere nobility had fallen—born on July 27th, 1768, came of famous parentage, for her great-great-grandmother was Marie Corneille, one of the two sisters of the celebrated poet of that name. Her mother had died early, her two brothers were Royalist *émigrés*, her father was poor, and she herself was living with an aunt at Caen. Her youth had been passed in great retirement, and being of a studious disposition, young Charlotte, ere the Revolution broke out, lived in a world of books. She became a Republican by conviction, a Republican of the pure stern type of the noblest of Greece and of Rome, idealistic, passionate for liberty. As the Revolution progressed Charlotte watched it with breathless eagerness, and it is needless to say that in thought she identified herself with the Gironde, sharing their hopes, their triumphs, their anxieties, and at last their fall and their despair. When the Girondins came to Caen

they came all unknowing to Charlotte Corday. The thread of her young life became interwoven with the tangle of theirs, so that she shall live with them in history for evermore.

From Caen she could only see the Montagne as the Gironde saw it, savage, cruel, devoid of all truth and mercy, incarnated in the squalor, the filth, the fury of Marat. Into that strong sweet brain, into that passionate heart, stole a thought that was like a flame: "What if I, like Brutus, stab the worst enemy of the Republic? What if a woman's arm should save the Republic from the terror of a despot, and dispel the darkness hovering round France?" Alas that she forgot that the dagger of Brutus made the return of the Republic impossible to Rome, and that a stream of blood flowed from the wounds of Cæsar which separated her for ever from her past. To kill a tyrant is to serve him, for the pity that surrounds a murdered man shrouds the crimes that, living, would have branded him for the loathing of all men. The deed of Charlotte Corday, though she dreamed not of that pitiful result, immortalised Marat in the heart of Paris, slew the Gironde she loved, and was the dawn of the Reign of Terror.

Charlotte Corday confides her thoughts to none. Alone she meditates; alone she resolves; alone she acts. But lest she should need some excuse if questioned on her road—she so young, so beautiful, so unprotected—she asks Barbaroux for that letter

of introduction to Duperret, and the letter obtained, modestly bids him farewell. To her father, residing at Argentan, she writes a letter, saying that she is leaving for England, to escape the horrors of civil war. And on the 9th July, 1793, Charlotte turns her back on her home, her youth, her studies, her fair peaceful serenity of life, and steps quietly into the coach that runs to Paris.

In Paris Marat is lying, sick almost to death. For long he had suffered terribly from internal inflammation, and who can say but that disease had much to do with his madness of suspicion, his frenzied cries against imagined traitors? At last, even his indomitable courage failed to carry him to his seat in the Convention. He could only find release from intolerable agony by sitting in a bath filled with warm water; he used a covered bath, which left his chest and arms exposed, so that he could write and read, and he followed with feverish energy every movement of the outside world. "We found our brother Marat in his bath," reported Maure to the Jacobin Club. "A table, an inkstand, journals, and books were round him, and he was busied unremittingly with public business." Marat's body was now cramped within those four walls, but his brain, his energy, his passion, stretched out eager hands all over France. Letter after letter—" *lettres haletantes*," panting letters, Louis Blanc calls them—reached the Convention, written with "a pen which trembled from pain".

From all parts of the country denunciations of traitors were sent to him, and helpless, unable to examine, burnt up with fever, suspicious to frenzy, what marvel that his anger touched delirium, and that the cries from that bath of agony resembled the ravings of a madman? The Convention seems to have judged his condition fairly, and remembering that in the earliest days of the Revolution Marat had often done well for his country, they received the wild effusions of these last hours with respect, but paid to them no practical attention. One gleam only that is not of pain and horror lights up that squalid room, that fevered figure. A woman loved Marat. Catherine Evrard, young, "good and devoted," dwelt with him, believed in him, adored him. And towards this strange pair, on July 10th, 11th, come ringing along the road from Caen the hoofs of the galloping coach-horses, behind whom sits Charlotte Corday.

On the 11th, about midday, the coach reaches Paris, and at the Hôtel de la Providence, Rue des Vieux-Augustins, Charlotte Corday descends, hires a room, has a bed prepared, and goes forthwith serenely to sleep to recover from the fatigues of her journey, and sleeps through afternoon and night. Calm and even-pulsed is this young woman. She will not hurry, fatigued, to her work, to fail from over-haste. On the 12th she delivers Barbaroux' note, and wanders over Paris, looking at all things with those keen grey-blue eyes of hers. Marat is

ill, she learns, and can only be seen, if at all, at his room, at No. 18, Rue de l'Ecole de Médecine. She returns to her hotel and writes, and goes out that day no more. On the morrow, Saturday, July 13th, Charlotte rises early, goes to the Palais Royal, and walks round, looking in at the shop-windows. At one she pauses, enters the shop, and laying down three francs she buys a large knife, dagger-pointed, in a leather sheath. Concealing it in her dress, she hails a hackney-coach: "Rue de l'Ecole de Médecine," says the full soft melodious voice, which "formed a portion of her beauty" (Lamartine). Marat; she would see citizen Marat, she tells the portress, but the "Friend of the People" is ill, and cannot be seen. Charlotte has apparently provided against this difficulty, and she hands in a note addressed to the man she seeks, and goes on her way. The letter is given to Marat and he reads:

Citizen, I come from Caen. Your devotion to the country leads me to suppose that you will hear with pleasure about the unhappy condition of that part of the Republic. I will visit you about one o'clock. Be good enough to receive me and to grant me a brief interview. I will place you in a position in which you will render a great service to France. I am, etc.,

CHARLOTTE CORDAY.

At one o'clock she calls, and is again refused. She returns to the hotel, and writes a second note:

Marat, I wrote to you this morning. Did my letter reach you? I cannot believe it, since your door was closed against me. I hope that to-morrow you will grant me an interview. I repeat that I have just arrived from Caen, and that I have

secrets to confide to you, vital to the Republic. Besides, I am persecuted for liberty's sake ; I am unhappy ; this gives me a claim to your protection.

CHARLOTTE CORDAY.

At seven o'clock in the evening, she is once more at the door of No. 18 with this note, never to be used, in her hand. Clad in white, with silken scarf crossed on her bosom and knotted behind ; lace Normandy cap with wide green ribbon. A fair vision of beauty, grace, and sweet strong womanhood, for the last time she knocks at that sternly closed door, on the other side of which she has somewhat to say and do. Again the portress will not let her in, but she passes her and goes swiftly up the stairs, and at the angry voice calling after her, Catherine Evrard—known also as Albertine Marat—comes to the private door of Marat, and she now bars the way. The penetrating musical voice, however, reaches Marat's ears, and he calls out, bidding them let the young citizen enter. Catherine opens the door, unwillingly and suspiciously, and the white-clad figure, with Death in her bosom, walks at Marat's command into Marat's room.

Charlotte Corday stands by the side of Marat ; she has reached the goal at last, and she speaks, words to him so commonplace, to her so full of meaning : "Citizen Marat, I am from Caen, the seat of this rebellion, and wished to speak to you." "Be seated, my child. Now, what are the traitors doing at Caen?" A flash from the grey-blue eyes, "which

look black under emotion," and which gazing on the face writhen with pain, the head haggard and unkempt, find nothing to soften the hideous image formed in her thought of Marat. This then is the man who has chased from Paris gallant Barbaroux, noble Pétion, and their colleagues. "Come, what deputies are at Caen?" "Barbaroux, Pétion, Louvet, Guadet, Buzot, and others." "Their heads shall fall within a fortnight," cries Marat, and turns to reach the tablets lying at his side. Has she waited for some word that shall seem to challenge her resolve? Swiftly, as the words fall from his lips, her bare right hand slips beneath the crossed silken scarf; he looks not up; his trembling fingers trace the names: Barbaroux, Pétion, Louvet—Ah! what is that sudden movement, that flash, that jet that covers and blots out the written names? "Help! dear friend!" It is a death-cry. Marat sinks downwards dead into water now blood-coloured, and motionless stands the white-clad figure, awaiting what may befall.

The cry of Marat, death-stricken, was echoed from without, and in rush Catherine, a woman servant, and a man, Laurent Basse. The latter catches up a chair and strikes Charlotte down. There is a rush of feet, the room is swiftly crowded, cries and execrations fill the air, National Guards arrive, and amid it all, having risen unaided from the ground, that white-robed woman stands silent and serene, the only quiet person in the roar and

the tumult, unmoved save when Catherine breaks into bitter wailing over her beloved, and then the grave face changes, the firm lips quiver, the clear eyes fill with tears. Charlotte Corday had never dreamed that in striking down the man whom she regarded as the assassin of the Republic, she would pierce through the heart of a woman.

LECTURE X

THE BIRTH OF THE TERROR

"FROM the crowd," says Louis Blanc, "which inundated the Rue des Cordeliers with its hurrying waves . . . a cry rose up to heaven, and it demanded the head of the assassin." The soldiers had arrived, and had taken Charlotte Corday into custody, somewhat against her will: "Cast me to that wild mob," she said proudly; "as they weep for Marat they are worthy to execute me." She was led into an adjoining room, and the *procès verbal* was quickly drawn up, Charlotte answering quietly and steadily every question addressed to her; she alleged that seeing that civil war was on the point of breaking out all over France she had resolved to sacrifice herself to save her country; that she had left Caen with the intention of killing Marat, and had no accomplices; that she knew no one in Paris, that she had arrived on Thursday, that she had been out on Friday, had bought a large knife at the Palais Royal on Saturday morning, the morning of that day, and that finally—and assuredly she was right, her "project was not an ordinary

one". One significant answer came to a question from Chabot: "How did you manage to strike Marat right on the heart?" "The indignation with which my own heart was throbbing showed me the spot."

She was taken to the prison of the Abbaye in a hackney coach, through the yelling and hooting of the crowds, and, it is said, in the same coach as that which had brought her to Marat's door. But the pure white robe was now blood-spotted, and the death she had carried to Marat now gloomed over her own proud head.

On the following day, the 14th July, all was confusion, in the streets, in the Convention itself. Duperret and Fauchet were summoned to the bar, as compromised by letters discovered, and Duperret frankly stated that Charlotte Corday had brought him a letter from Barbaroux, and that he had arranged to take her and introduce her to Garat, one of the ministers. Garat not being visible, another appointment was made. She had advised him to leave Paris and to go to Caen, and on his replying that he could not desert his post, she answered: "You commit a folly." No more had Duperret to tell. Fauchet knew absolutely nothing, but both were arrested on suspicion.

Round the corpse of Marat crowds gathered through the day, and the day following, and on the 16th his body was carried with great pomp to the garden of the Cordeliers, and there to await more formal obsequies in the Pantheon. There was a

very delirium of popular feeling. Marat's heart was enclosed in a funeral urn, and suspended from the roof in the hall of the Cordeliers. Fresh garlands were hung daily round his grave, and women kneeling there mingled in their prayers to the "Sacred heart of Jesus" aspirations to the "Sacred heart of Marat". The religious frenzy that had animated him living, passed into the hearts of his mourners, and they compared him to the Jesus whom he had loved to describe as "the good Sans-culotte".¹ With their sobs were mingled cries for vengeance, demands for lives to expiate his death. From this strange confusion of grotesque piety and bloodthirsty fury, a confusion which indeed recalled the man round whose tomb it swirled, we can but turn aside with loathing and disgust; but also with added hatred to that feudalism and ecclesiasticism, which for centuries had been building

¹ The following extract from the journal of Hébert, the famous *Père Duchesne*, gives the Maratist view of Jesus. "The gospel, without the priests, would be the best book to put into the hands of the young; it would mould their heart to virtue; they would find the model of perfection in the good Sans-culotte who made this divine book. I know no better Jacobin than this noble Jesus. He is the founder of all popular associations; he would not have them too large. . . . The club that he formed was composed but of twelve members, all poor Sans-culottes; even into that number one false brother insinuated himself, named Judas, which is Hebrew for Pétion. With these eleven Jacobins, Jesus preached obedience to law, equality, liberty, charity, fraternity; he waged eternal war against priests and financiers, destroyed the Jewish religion, which was a sanguinary worship, and taught men to trample wealth under their feet, to honour old age, to forgive offences. All sans-culotterie quickly gathered round him."

towards that apotheosis in the Cordeliers, and had created Marat as the incarnation of the people's misery, the symbol of their unutterable wrongs.

On the day of Marat's burial Charlotte Corday was removed to the Conciergerie, having spent the Sunday and Monday chiefly in writing to Barbaroux, recounting all she had seen and done since leaving Caen. But little fuller light is thrown on her action by these last words: "I have never hated but one human being, and with what violence, my act has shown I enjoy perfect peace; for the last two days the happiness of my country makes my own The name of Marat dishonours your race. He was a ferocious beast, who was about to devour the remains of France by the fire of civil war I believe the last words of Marat have been printed, but I doubt if he said any. His last words to me, after having written all your names, were to console me by telling me that in a few days he would have you all guillotined at Paris. These words decided his fate, though I confess that what entirely decided me was the courage with which our volunteers enrolled on Sunday, July 7th. You remember I promised to make Pétion repent his unjust suspicions."

To her father also she wrote, praying him to forgive her for "having disposed of my life without your permission," and bidding him farewell. "Tomorrow, at 8 o'clock, I shall be tried."

On the morrow, July 17th, she stood before her judges, quiet, steady, glorious in her youth and beauty. Fouquier Tinville was there as accuser, but the witnesses for the prosecution were cut short by her declaration: "These formalities are unnecessary: I killed Marat." She was subjected to a long interrogation, but all her answers were concise and clear. "What led you to assassinate Marat?" "His crimes." "What do you mean by his crimes?" "The miseries he has caused since the Revolution" . . . "It was from the papers you read that you learned Marat was an anarchist?" "Yes; I knew he was perverting France. I killed one man to save a hundred thousand . . . I was a Republican before the Revolution, and I never wanted energy." "What do you mean by energy?" "Those who put self on one side, and sacrifice themselves for their country" . . . "What did you expect to gain by killing Marat?" "To restore peace to my country." Interrogated as to the fashion in which she had dealt the fatal blow—it had passed between the first and second ribs, straight through the lung, and had severed the carotid arteries at their very base—she answered: "I struck as it happened; it was chance." She shuddered when the knife was shown to her, and turned away, and on Fouquier Tinville saying sneeringly: "You must have had plenty of practice in such crime!" "Oh! the monster!" she cried, shaken from her composure, "he takes me for an assassin!"

No defence was, of course, possible. Sentence of death was pronounced, and at seven o'clock on the same evening Charlotte Corday stepped into the fatal tumbril, and passed through silent crowds, radiant, to her doom. Robespierre, Danton, Camille Desmoulins, gazed at her as she went by. A young man, Adam Lux, carried away by her serene beauty and a certain sweet joyousness which lit her face and eyes, fell into passionate delirium of admiration; and writing a panygeric, in which he apostrophised her as "greater than Brutus," he perished a few months later on the scaffold, crying in ecstasy: "I die, then, for Charlotte Corday." At the foot of the guillotine, for an instant, the fair face turns deadly pale. Then, with swift recovery, Charlotte Corday rises, descends from the tumbril, passes lightly and quickly up the steps, and lays her head beneath the axe. A heavy fall, and the keen blade has severed head from trunk, and Charlotte Corday has paid her life for the life she took.¹

"She has destroyed us," said Vergniaud, with that keen and mournful prescience which distinguished him, "but she has shown us how to die." "The best way to avenge Marat," said Robespierre, "is to prosecute relentlessly his foes. The vengeance which spends itself in funeral honours is soon over, and loses itself in futile pomp. Renounce your

¹ The story of Charlotte has been put together by comparing Louis Blanc's *Histoire de la Révolution*, Lamartine's *History of the Girondists*, the *Histoire des Journaux*, and Alison's *History of Europe*.

useless discussions, and avenge him in the fashion which alone is worthy of his name." The vengeance worthy of Marat was the Reign of Terror.

Camille Desmoulins had said to the Girondins with rare insight: "Marat, against whom you demand a decree of accusation, is perhaps the only man who can save the Revolution on a side where danger is least expected, but which is in reality the only spot where a breach is practicable . . . Marat, by his subterranean life and his indefatigable labours, is regarded as the *maximum* of patriotism, and firm in this position, everything which may be proposed which goes further than Marat seems to the people to be but delirium and extravagance."¹ The value of such a life in a revolutionary period is great. While Marat lived the wildest revolutionaries felt that he was watching over the Revolution, and that it was safe. Marat dead, they were left to their own mad fears and suspicions. And they were more dangerous than Marat, for he could be controlled and managed by the Convention, whereas they were a constant menace, and drove the deputies of the Montagne forward blindly, each fearing to be suspected of lack of patriotism. Marat had no such fear, and he dominated by his courage and his sincerity. Robespierre, a weaker though a better man, saw rising around him the waves of a tempest he could not ride, and was driven into crime after crime.

¹ *Vieux Cordelier*, No. II.

hoping desperately to save the Liberty, for whose tomb every crime was a new stone.

Meanwhile, though the Girondin insurrection in the north had vanished, broken up, as we have seen, by the unveiling of Royalist plans, the results of the Girondin attempts to raise the departments were bearing fruit all over the south and east of France. At Lyons the Royalists, fighting masked under the Girondin banner, set up a congress and a tribunal, arrested the Jacobin functionaries, and on July 16th executed Chalier, the leading Jacobin Town Councillor. At Bordeaux, Toulouse, Toulon, Marseilles, all was in flames. Lighted by the Girondins, the fuel was brought by the Royalists, who in town after town, as they felt their growing strength, replaced Girondin by Royalist leaders, and raised in each town scaffolds on which Jacobin blood was spilt. The Gironde found itself between Royalism and the Montagne. It had been used as a tool by the first, and breaking with it, as we have found, there was nothing left for it but the guillotine.

The Convention, which knows the Gironde now only as part of the counter-revolution, issues a decree of outlawry against the fugitive deputies, and they see the decree posted on their own hall of meeting in Caen. How shall they win to safety, these eleven fugitive deputies, against whom now will be turned every loyal hand in France? With Riouffe, a friend, they decide to don the uniform of National Volunteers, and march southwards in a

Breton regiment, hoping to reach Bordeaux, and there to find refuge and peace. Through the hot July days they toil southwards, Barbaroux "with sprained ankle, yet ever cheery, full of hope and valour," "Cussy tormented with gout, Buzot too fat for marching," Pétion with serenity "only once ruffled" during that terrible tramp.¹ They are suspected, and leave the battalion, and march by cross-country paths, fearing arrest at each village. At Moncontour they hear whispered: "That is Pétion, that is Buzot," and take refuge in some woods in the neighbourhood, where they are drenched with pouring rain.² Sometimes when challenged they escape by adroitness; more than once, being armed, they show fight, and so win on their way. At last they reach Quimper, and there, despairing of getting across by land, and finding friends, they rest for a while, awaiting a ship that may take them to Bordeaux. Brissot, who endeavours to escape to Switzerland in the disguise of a travelling merchant, is arrested at Moulins, and carried prisoner to Paris. Louvet's wife has reached him despite all perils, and together in a cottage they taste brief respite of peace, and then with Buzot, Pétion, and Barbaroux, they embark in a fishing boat, and ultimately reach Bordeaux. "They thought they had attained the land of liberty—it had become the land of death."³

¹ *French Revolution*, T. Carlyle, vol. iii, p. 151.

² *History of the Girondists*, Lamartine, vol. iii, p. 95.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 97.

Through this same month of July the armies of the allied powers were rolling back the French before their advancing tide. Mayence, long besieged, was at last compelled to surrender, worn out by completest famine, horses, dogs, cats, mice being all devoured by the citizens, ere they capitulated. The gallant garrison marched out with the honours of war, the only pledge exacted being that the soldiers should not fight against the Prussians during the ensuing year. Goethe watched the outfiling, and has left a record of the scene: "Escorted by Prussian horse came first the French Garrison. Nothing could look stranger than this latter; a column of Marseillaise, slight, swarthy, parti-coloured, in patched clothes, came tripping on; as if King Edwin had opened the Dwarf Hill, and sent out his nimble Host of Dwarfs. Next followed regular troops; serious, sullen; not as if downcast or ashamed. But the remarkablest appearance, which struck every one, was that of the Chasers (*Chasseurs*) coming out mounted; they had advanced quite silent to where we stood, when their band struck up the *Marseillaise*. This revolutionary *Te Deum* has in itself something mournful and bodeful, however briskly they played; but at present they gave it in altogether slow time, proportionate to the creeping step they rode at. It was piercing and fearful, and a most serious-looking thing, as these cavaliers, long, lean men of a certain age, with mien suitable to the music, came

pacing on ; singly you might have likened them to Don Quixote ; in mass, they were highly dignified. But now a single troop became notable—that of the Commissioners or *Représentans*. Merlin of Thionville, in hussar uniform, distinguishing himself by wild beard and look, had another person in similar costume on his left ; the crowd shouted out, with rage, at sight of this latter, the name of a Jacobin Townsman and Clubbist ; and shook itself to seize him. Merlin drew bridle ; referred to his dignity as French Representative, to the vengeance that should follow any injury done ; he would advise every one to compose himself, for this was not the *last time* they would see him here.”¹

Following Mayence, fell other towns. Condé, in the north, was reduced also by famine ; Valenciennes, after three months of siege, having lost seven thousand fighting men out of ten thousand, and having slain twenty thousand of its assailants, surrendered to the Duke of York. Custine, the general of the Rhine army, was recalled to Paris, guilty of little, apparently, except that towns capitulated when the last pound of food was swallowed, and that he was unable to carry to them the help for which they looked. A man not capable of the gigantic efforts then required, to be pitied more than blamed. The troops from Mayence, too valuable to be ideal, were sent

¹ *Belagerung von Mainz* (Goethe's *Werke*, xxx, 815), as quoted in Carlyle's *French Revolution*, vol. iii, p. 158.

forthwith off into La Vendée, where the long struggle still raged month after month. To subdue Lyons, now in full insurrection, Dubois-Grancé was sent with seventy thousand men. Toulon had invited the English, under Admiral Hood, within its walls, and was besieged by the French under Barras, Fréron, and Robespierre, junior, and among the officers of the artillery was one young silent "bronze-dark" man, Napoleon Buonaparte. Do you want to know how men were found to fight thus on every side for France? One story will tell you how. "A poor citizen of Angers, named Gaudin, had nothing to offer to his country save his son, and offered him. The young man went to serve in the army of the north. Seized with an irresistible longing to see his aged father, the lad left his regiment without leave, and, travelling home, knocked at his father's door. "Who is there?"—"Your son."—"You lie! My son is on the frontier, in front of the enemy. I will not open."¹

On July 26th the Convention, at the request of the Committee of Public Safety, among several other decrees, passed one which ordered the trial of Marie Antoinette. Six weary months had passed over her head in the prison of the Temple, and she lay there, apparently forgotten. But now that the allied armies were drawing nearer, and that Royalist conspiracies were rending the country, men's

¹ *Courrier de l'Armée des Côtes de la Rochelle*, No. 2, quoted by Louis Blanc.

eyes began to turn towards the walls that enclosed the widowed Queen, and the boy that had been Dauphin, and might yet be King, of France. On July 3rd the mother and son—till then left unmolested—were separated, and ten days after the decree of the Convention, on August 5th, Marie Antoinette was removed from the Temple, bidding farewell to her sister and her daughter, and was driven to the prison of the Conciergerie, and there lodged in the Council Chamber. Weber relates that the jailor and his wife showed her much kindness, and that Deputy Voulaud visited her "to enquire whether she was conveniently lodged and boarded, and whether she wanted anything".¹ In this prison also her friends managed to communicate with her, some even obtaining access to her room; and the constant attempts to deliver her, as well as the plots that centred in her and her son, pushed the unwilling Convention into their tardy resolve to bring her to trial. But even now, after removing her to the Conciergerie, they again let the matter slip, and nothing was done against her until the month of October.

On the day following the issue of this decree, July 27th, Robespierre was elected to the Committee of Public Safety, and from this time forward became personally responsible for its acts. The Committee had been remodelled on July 10th, and consisted of

¹ *Memoirs of Maria Antoinetta*, Weber, vol. iii, pp. 384, 385 and note.

Barère, Hérault de Séchelles, Jean-Bon-Saint-André, Gasparin, Thuriot, Couthon, Saint-Just, Lindet, and Prieur-de-la-Marne. Gasparin retired, Robespierre taking his place, and Carnot, Billaud-Varenne, and Collot d'Herbois were called to it a few days later. This Committee now became the one executive authority, the Convention itself appearing to vest in it its active executive functions. These are the men who ruled through the Reign of Terror. Of these Robespierre, even before he entered the Committee, was the guiding mind, and his enormous power at the Jacobin Club gave him the popular support which the Girondins had always lacked. In this Committee he had no rival. Danton, the stronger but less subtle nature, taken with a fit of weariness, had left Paris for Arcis-sur-Aube, where he lived awhile with his wife and young children. Just before he left, walking by the Seine with Camille Desmoulins, as the sun, sinking behind the hills of Passy, reddened the river till it rolled like a stream of blood: "Look," said Danton, and Camille saw the tribune's eyes fill with tears, "see, how much blood. The Seine runs blood! Ah! too much blood has been spilt. Come, take up your pen again; write and demand clemency; I will support you."¹

On the 10th of August, in the midst of all this turmoil and peril, Paris threw herself, with that strange buoyancy of hers, into a national fête, and

¹ *Camille Desmoulins and His Wife*, Jules Clarette, p. 249.

proclaimed the Constitution on the Champ-de-Mars. Eight thousand delegates from the departments, each elected by the primary councils (see p. 309), came to Paris to proclaim the acceptance by the people of the new Constitution and to swear to it allegiance. On the ruins of the Bastille is raised a huge statue of Nature, and from this the procession starts, defiling thence along the Boulevards, thousands upon thousands strong. The members of the Convention marched last, surrounded by eighty-six of the delegates, representing the eighty-six departments, and these all held a long tricoloured ribbon, enclosing the Convention in an unbroken circle. At the Place de la Révolution rises a great statue of Liberty, so near alas! to the spot where the guillotine is wont to frown, and then, when they cross the river and reach the Invalides, a third statue, of the People trampling on Federation, greets them, and so on to the Champ-de-Mars, where stands the great altar of the Fatherland. And there where on July 14th, 1790, Louis XVI had pledged his Royal oath to France, there on the very altar where army, legislature, and nation had sworn in joyous faith in a Liberty bloodlessly won, there on this August 10th, 1793, France wounded, starved, blinded, desperate, but kingless, lifted up upon that altar bleeding hands that yet were free, and swore a mighty oath to keep her faith to Liberty or else to die in striving: "Liberty Equality, Fraternity," she swore unblenching:

LIBERTY, EQUALITY, FRATERNITY, OR—DEATH."

The delegates from the departments went not home again without leaving their mark on history. Admitted to the bar of the Convention they made a memorable demand: "The arrest of all suspected persons, and the levy in mass of the people." Danton was in the Convention, and the cry woke the old fire. "Good," he cried, "let us grant their wish. The deputies of the primary assemblies come to initiate the terror. I demand that the Convention, now conscious of its own dignity since just clad with the national force, I demand that it invest the commissioners of the primary assemblies with the right of calling to arms, of providing the commissariat, of appealing to the people, of rousing the citizens to energy, and of requisitioning four hundred thousand men. It is with cannon-balls that we will communicate the Constitution to our enemies! The time has come to pledge our last great oath, that we vow ourselves to death or to the annihilation of tyrants."¹

On the 23rd August, Barère, as the mouthpiece of the Committee of Public Safety, proposed the last desperate levy in mass, the measure that freed France from the invader and raised her to be the armed wonder of the world. Glorious words they are, as they come ringing from patriot lips to patriot hearts. "Liberty has become the creditor of every

¹ *Histoire de la Révolution*, Mignet, vol. ii, pp. 12, 13.

citizen ; some owe her labour, some their fortunes ; these owe her counsel, those their arms ; all owe her their life-blood. All the French, each sex, every age, are called by the Fatherland to the defence of Liberty. All physical and mental faculties, all political and industrial means, are hers ; all metals, all elements, are her tributaries. Let each spring to his post in the coming national and military movement. The young men shall go to the battle ; the married men shall forge arms, transport baggage and artillery, provide subsistence ; the women shall make clothes for the soldiers, shall make tents, shall carry their tender care into the hospitals of the wounded ; the children shall tear old linen into lint ; the old men undertaking the mission they had among the ancients, shall be carried into public places ; they shall fire the courage of the young, and shall preach hatred of kings and the unity of the Republic. National buildings shall be converted into barracks, public squares into workshops ; the cellars shall be prepared to form saltpetre ; all saddle-horses shall be requisitioned for cavalry, all draught-horses for artillery ; shot-guns, weapons of parade and pikes, will do for home use. The Republic is but one vast besieged city ; France must be one camp."¹ Then, passing into practical details : "The Committee of Public Safety shall originate everything, organise everything, shall require throughout the Republic men and

¹ *Histoire de la Révolution*, Mignet, vol. ii, pp. 13, 14.

material for the execution of these measures. The representatives of the people, who are sent to their respective circuits, are invested with absolute powers for this object. The levy shall be general. The unmarried men and widowers without children shall march first. They shall repair to the chief town in their district, and there be exercised in the use of arms, until their departure for the armies. The banner of each organised battalion shall bear this device: 'The French nation risen against tyrants!'"¹

France answered to the call of the Convention. From every village and furrow, as the teeth of Cadmus, sprang armed men. Fourteen armies and twelve hundred thousand men were shortly at the service of the Republic. Turn over the lists of the officers, and you will find the names of all those who became greatest as the generals of Napoleon, in those glorious lists of volunteers. So swept the breath of freedom over France, that her children became soldiers at the wind of it. And this war was, indeed, what many wars have been misnamed, a Holy War. For the sword of France was drawn for national life, for the right to guard her homes from the foot of the foreigner, and her rooftrees from the feudal nobles who of old had brought beneath them lust and crime; for the right to keep her soil Republican, and the kingless Freedom she had won pure from the touch of a Royal hand; for

¹ *History of the Girondists*, Lamartine, vol. iii, p. 114.

the right to hold Man's Rights unnarrowed, and freedom of meeting and of press! That the war-fever seized her, that the glare of military glory dazzled her, that the war which began as war of self-defence turned into war of aggression, I know too sadly well. But none the less was France glorious and heroic in her rising against tyrants, and while men's hearts glow for Thermopylæ and thrill for Salamis, while England boasts of Cromwell and Italy of Garibaldi, so long shall gallant spirits honour the Republic in her courage, and pulses shall throb faster when they hear of the devoted volunteers of '93.

With this torrent of popular enthusiasm against the invaders, there came as ever a backward wave of punishment of traitors at home. On August 27th is guillotined the unfortunate General Custine, found guilty of treasonable neglect in face of the enemy. The turbulence of Paris is still aggravated by the ever-existing famine, and there are recurring bread riots from day to day. "Bread or Death" is now the cry that is yelled by haggard crowds surrounding the Convention and the Commune alike. The Royalists in Paris, convinced that the Republic must now fall before the advancing armies of the foreigner, begin to show their colours boldly, and to treat the populace with the old feudal disdain. Through the crowds shouting for food are driven the carriages of the wealthy, and the theatres are crowded nightly with gaily dressed men and women, who applaud

every phrase that can be turned into an insult to the Revolution. With the people starving, and France in peril of very life, these aristocrats—the name once more comes hissing through lips white with famine—sport on the brink of the precipice which is the Terror. On September 4th, the starving crowds overflow into the Hotel de Ville itself, committing no violence but filling every room and passage with cries of "Bread! Bread!" Chaumette tries to pacify them with promises that the Convention will fix a maximum price for the necessities of life, but they cry: "Promises, promises! what we want is bread, and now!" None the less, they disperse quietly, and the morrow dawns on the famous sitting of September 5th, the sitting which established the Terror by law.

It opens with a dispatch from the army, reporting that the Austrians were masters of Sierk, had pillaged the town, burned the houses, murdered numbers of the inhabitants, and had mutilated their prisoners, some by cutting off their feet and hands, others by tearing out their tongues. Robespierre is in the president's chair, Danton has reappeared in his seat.

A deputation from the Commune knocks at the door led by Pache and Chaumette. Pache speaks very quietly, but his statement is eloquent enough without phrases: "The people are in fear of dying for want of bread." Chaumette uses other fashion: "The tyrants of Europe persist in their terrible

system of starving the French people; they would make it yield its freedom for a piece of bread . . . Montagne! be the Sinai of France! No quarter to traitors! Throw between them and us the bar of eternity! The day of justice and of wrath has come! . . . Form the revolutionary army; let it traverse the departments; let all men join it who will have the Republic one and indivisible; let an incorruptible tribunal follow it, terrible, carrying the instrument that beheads plots with a blow; let it bear on its ensigns: 'Peace to men of good will, war to the starvers! Protection to the weak, war to the tyrants! No oppression, but justice!''¹

As he finishes the crowd overflows into the hall, covering every foot of space, crying: *Vive la République!* Proposal follows proposal, "like claps of thunder," and one man, Billaud-Varenne, pale, sad, shifty-eyed, repeats at intervals like the chorus in a Greek play: "Act, act, act!" Amid the confusion of suggestions that hurtle through the air, see! Danton is on his feet. Little aid is looked for thence from the despairing crowds. Danton had deserted them; he has scarce taken part lately in their struggles; the Revolution has been seething without him. But Danton had said of himself: "Danton sleeps; he will awaken." And now Danton is awake!

¹ *Histoire de la Révolution*, Louis Blanc, vol. ii, p. 517. The details of the scene which follow are taken from the same authority, and by him chiefly from the *Moniteur*.

The Revolutionary Tribunal is too slow, he thunders, for he is the Danton of September again, and with the Republic in danger he knows no ruth or mercy: "Every day an aristocrat, a criminal, should pay his debts with his head." Forty sols a day must be given to each starving citizen. Above all, every man must be armed. There must be a gun, if not a cannon, for every patriot. "Let a man lose his life rather than his gun."

Hats fly high in air; shouts resound from every corner of the hall. Danton is awake again, and surely now the Republic will be saved. Danton's proposals are carried by acclamation, and finally Barère presents in the form of decrees the various proposals which had been approved of: "Let us place the Terror on the order of the day," he cries; "the Royalists crave for blood? They shall have that of the conspirators, of the Brissots, of Marie Antoinette. They would trouble the labour of the Convention? Conspirators, it shall trouble yours. They would destroy the Montagne? The Montagne shall crush them!"

The decrees ran as follows: (1) An armed force, composed of six thousand men, of twelve hundred artillery, commanded by Ronsin, shall restrain counter-revolutionists, and see to the providing of food wherever there is want. (2) Death to those who buy or sell *assignats*. (3) The Revolutionary Tribunal should be divided into four sections to (4) expedite its proceedings. Buissot, Gensonné,

Clavière, and Lebrun shall at once be brought before the Revolutionary Tribunal. (5) Domiciliary nocturnal visits shall be permitted. (6) Members of the Revolutionary Committees shall receive three francs a day. (7) The sections shall sit twice a week, and an indemnity of two francs (forty sols) shall be paid to the workmen who are obliged to leave their work to attend them. (8) As the foreigners are sending into France agents to promote disorder, every stranger who does not obtain a certificate from the municipal officers shall be arrested. (9) Women living in open immorality shall be banished, as the Republic needs austere minds and vigorous bodies. Finally, and this comes oddly after such serious matters, pretty women petitioners must be excluded from the police bureaux, because their seductions interfere with the rigorous course of justice. To this organisation of the Terror was added, on September 17th, the terrible "Law of the Suspect". It was brought up by Merlin de Douai in the name of the Committee of Legislation, presided over by Cambacérès, and consisted of no less than seventy-four charges, under which citizens might be arrested. Lamartine gives the chief heads: "Immediately after the publication of this present decree, all suspected persons who are found in the territory of the Republic and are still at liberty, shall be arrested. Are deemed suspected—those who by their conduct, writings, or language, have proved themselves

partisans of tyranny and federation, and enemies of liberty. Those who cannot prove they possess the means of existence, and that they have accomplished their civic duties. Those to whom certificates of citizenship have been refused. Those of the *ei-devant* nobles, fathers, mothers, sons, daughters, sisters, husbands, wives, and agents of emigrants, who have not constantly manifested their attachment to the Revolution.' 'Suspected,' added Barère, 'The nobles suspected; the courtiers, the lawyers, suspected; the priests suspected; the bankers, the strangers, the speculators, suspected; those who lament what the Revolution has achieved, suspected; those who grieve at our success.'"¹

The prisons soon overflowed with victims. The guillotine was set up in every town, and drawn from village to village. No man, no woman was safe from denouncement. The tumbril carrying the daily toll of victims rolled every evening through the Paris streets, till it became a sight so common that the passers-by scarce turned to gaze. A fearful state of things. Yet in judging it, and in judging those who ruled, be it remembered that the Terror was the work of the Governments of Europe, allied to crush the French Republic and to re-impose on France the tyranny that she had shattered into pieces at her feet. Be it remembered also that the Committee of Public Safety which was the arm

¹ *History of the Girondists*, vol. iii, p. 124.

of the Terror, and the Convention which was its brain, rolled back the tide of invasion, submerging France on every side; that it hurled back Spain beyond the Pyrenees, drove the Duke of York off French soil, repulsed the armies of Prussia and of Austria, crushed the Vendean insurrection, broke the Royalist movements in Southern and Eastern France, and extinguished civil war. Be it remembered that it found France in peril and left her safe; found her crushed, and left her upright, found her in despair and weakness, and left her confident and strong. If ever it is justifiable to act on the theory that *Salus populi suprema lex* ("The safety of the people is the supreme law"), it was surely justifiable then, and history, in judging the men of the Terror, will not forget that if stern to others they craved no mercy for themselves, that they laid down life as freely as they took it, and that if they saw no way of safety for the Republic save through the guillotine, the error had in it nothing sordid, nothing base, nothing of personal gain; they were fanatics in a noble cause, and on their glory and their crimes must fall the mingled tears of admiration and regret.

And now with these opening days of October the clouds of death gather thickly round the doomed head of her who once was Queen of France. On the 3rd, at the suggestion of Billaud-Varenne, the Revolutionary Tribunal was bidden to try her without further delay, and on the 14th she stood

before her judges. Hermann was president, with Foucault, Douzé-Verneuil, and Lane as judges; Fouquier-Tinville, the public prosecutor was at his post: the eleven jurymen were, Gannay, wig-maker; Grenier-Trey, tailor; Antonelle, ex-marquis; Chatelet, painter; Souberbielle, surgeon; Picard, profession not given; Trinchard, cabinet-maker; Jourdeuil, ex-tipstaff; Devèse, carpenter; Deydier, lockmaker; Gimond, tailor.

An armchair was ready for her, and she seated herself quietly in it; her hair had turned white, dark rings were round her eyes, but her imperial beauty remained, and her indomitable pride and iron resolution carried her calmly through the terrible scene. "Your name?" asked Hermann formally.—"Marie Antoinette, of Lorraine, in Austria."—"Your condition?"—"I am the widow of Louis Capet, once King of the French."—"Your age?"—"Thirty-eight." Fouquier-Tinville advanced, and read his long accusation. "There, in solemn form, were revived all the immodest stories which the spite of the court had passed on from the boudoirs into the streets and taverns; there the attachments of a young and inexperienced woman, her love of pleasure, her follies, her extravagance, a thousand faults that were those of her education and her rank, rather than of her conduct, were cruelly transformed into crimes. But alas! how many true things were also there. When the public accuser showed Marie Antoinette breaking off

the easy life of her early years to become the soul of a war to the death against the Revolution ; taking possession of her husband, troubling him, irritating him, intoxicating him with regret for a lost power, inspiring him with contempt for his sworn faith, joining in every plot, becoming the 'king' of the nobles and the goddess of the priests ; allying herself in secret with the foreign enemies of the Republic, and in order to regain a sceptre which the *ancien régime* had made of iron, ready to run the sanguinary risk of a foreign war complicated by civil war ; what man then living, with the history of the time before his eyes, would have dared to lift his eyes to the public prosecutor and have said : ' You lie ! ' Where he did lie, and that dishonourably for ever, was when he used certain foul and false revelations, wrenched from the fear of an imprisoned child, after having been obviously suggested to him ; when he did not blush to impute to a mother that she had herself corrupted her child." ¹

Witness after witness was called, Bailly, the Comte d'Estaing, Valazé, Manuel. Ah ! what memories must have awakened in the Queen's heart as she saw these shadows, rising from her past. The two first gave no evidence that injured her, but Valazé's evidence was fatal. He told of money signed for by Marie Antoinette, and of a letter to Louis XVI, containing a plan of campaign to be communicated to her ; a late minister of state,

¹ *Histoire de la Révolution*, Louis Blanc, vol. II, p. 568.

Tour du Pin, told of a report of the exact state of the French army asked for by her. Had not these particulars been wanted for the guidance of the kings who were threatening the frontiers of France?

While her doom was thus hanging in the balance, Marie Antoinette sat, apparently but languidly interested, playing with her fingers on the arm of the chair as though it were a piano. To all questions she gave brief answers, until Hébert gave evidence against her of the brutal and shocking accusation, the accusation of having corrupted her own son, hoping to ruin health and brain and to rule in his name from the throne of France. To this infamy she answered nothing, and when a juryman noted that she had not met the accusation, for a moment her stately calm broke down, and her voice trembled as she spoke: "Sir, if I did not answer, it is because nature refuses to reply to such an accusation levelled against a mother." And looking round on the women who crowded the court: "I appeal to every mother here!"

The listening crowd, hostile as it was to "the Austrian," gave vent to a murmur of approval. Even Hébert shrank back ashamed.

Four questions were put to the jury: "(1) Is it proved that there existed plots tending to furnish the foreign enemies of the Republic with help in money, to open to them the entry into the territory, and to facilitate the progress of their arms? (2) Is

Marie Antoinette, of Austria, proved to have co-operated in these plots? (3) Is it proved that a plot exists tending to excite civil war? (4) Has Marie Antoinette, of Austria, taken part in this plot?"

An hour passed. It was four o'clock in the early morning when the jury returned into court, and gave in their verdict of guilty. The Queen heard the sentence of death pronounced without a word, and, silent, she turned and went between her guards, the torches flaring smokily in the dull grey before the autumn dawn. Weber tells us that "on entering the prison she threw herself, dressed as she was, on the bed, and covering her feet with a blanket she slept tranquilly for two hours".¹ At eleven, the discrowned Queen was summoned to her doom. She had clad herself in white, white only broken by the black ribbon bound round her snowy cap. Samson, the executioner, tied her arms, but lightly, ere she stepped into the rough cart that was to bear her to the guillotine, bear her for the last time through the streets of Paris, the streets through which she had driven as Dauphiness, as Queen, in the exquisite bloom of her youth, in the stately beauty of her womanhood. Now for the last time she drives through them, a bare cart for her chariot, the headsman as lackey at her back. But no fear is on her face, no lack of dignity in her bearing. Let us do this justice to Marie Antoinette, that mischievous as she was in her life, fatal as she

¹ *Memoirs*, vol. iii, p. 360.

would have been to France, had France not struck her from the Throne, her last hours were full of a grave courage that redeemed much of her errors and her crimes. Through crowds, for the most part silent, she passes, unheeding the cries of *Vive la République*, which here and there at intervals break the stillness. A keen look of hatred as she passes the Palais Royal; one of softness and regret as her eyes fall on the garden of the Tuileries, where so many happy hours had passed away. The cart stops. She is at the scaffold.

With steady steps she mounts, and turns her eyes for the last time towards the towers of the Temple where her children weep their mother. Then, without a word, she stretches herself on the fatal plank. The knife falls. Marie Antoinette is dead.

In the register of La Madeleine we find the record of her burial: "For the coffin of the widow Capet, seven francs."

For the woman who fell from the Throne to the scaffold, from the golden magnificence of Versailles to the coffin of seven francs, who can avoid a feeling of pity which almost covers the memory of her past? In face of such a fall, of such a fate, censure shrinks back appalled; but her past being what it was, justice may speak no word of praise. Silence only befits that tomb.

PART III

LECTURE XI¹

THE HORROR OF GREAT DARKNESS

WHILE the trial of Marie Antoinette was dragging through its weary two days to its foreseen conclusion (it began October 14th and ended in the early morning of October 16th), the fate of the Girondins was rapidly approaching. On the 3rd of October, Amar,* the reporter of the Committee of Public Safety, mounted the tribune of the Convention to read the report of the Committee on the twenty-two Girondins who had been in custody since June 8th, and this report declared "guilty of conspiracy against the unity and indivisibility of the Republic," 40 persons, among them Brissot, Vergniaud, Gensonné, and other Girondins under arrest; to these names was added by the Convention that of Philippe Egalité, *ci-devant* Duc d'Orléans. It next proclaimed as traitors the fugitive Girondin deputies, and then—after the doors of the hall had been

¹ Lectures one to six made Volume I, Lectures seven to ten Volume II in the English editions.

locked at Amar's request, so that none might escape—the names of seventy-three deputies of the centre were read out, as guilty of signing the protests of the 6th and 19th of June, the protests against the 31st of May, the expulsion of the Girondins. The report was unanimously adopted—the accused not voting—and the seventy-three incriminated deputies were conveyed to prison; Robespierre, however, exerted himself effectually to prevent their trial, and both he and Danton strove to save the Girondins themselves, but in vain. His view of the situation was shown plainly enough when, having ceased to plead for them, Garat went to him to ask him to renew his efforts: "Do not speak of it again," he answered, "I cannot save them; there are periods in revolutions when to live is a crime, and when men must know how to surrender their heads when demanded. And mine also will, perhaps, be required of me," seizing it in both hands; "you shall see if I dispute it."¹

Danton, weary of bloodshed he could not check, asked permission to leave Paris, and we read on the sitting of 12th October: "The President informs the National Convention that Citizen Danton, deputy, asks for leave of absence that he may go to Arcis to recruit his health. The Convention grants the leave." To Arcis-sur-Aube he goes. "There, at least, in his native home, under his mother's roof, he could breathe, he could forget. He wished to

¹ *History of the Girondists*, Lamartine, vol. iii, pp. 162—5.

be far from Paris during the slaughter of October 31st, when the purest blood of the Gironde was to be spilt. He regained his old self by his mother's side, with old Marguerite Heriot, his nurse, and his rough shell fell off; he again found room for affectionate feelings, for tenderness, and for forgotten aspirations. It seemed to him, on arriving from Paris at this little town in Champagne, that he had passed from the atmosphere of a blacksmith's forge into the restful air of an oasis. It is told in the place that while he was chatting in the evening at the fireside, telling his mother that he should soon return to Arcis not to leave it again, the townsfolk came out of curiosity (and some in horror) and flattened their noses against the window-panes of Madame Danton's house, "to get a look at the face of the Titan of the Revolution. And when they saw him, tranquil, dreamy, melancholy, or sometimes laughing, they withdrew astonished and subdued."¹

The Girondins, it will be remembered, were at first merely committed to the custody of the *gens d'armes*, but as feeling rose against them during the summer the strictness of their imprisonment had increased, and they were confined in turn in the Abbaye, the Luxembourg, the Carmes, and finally in the Conciergerie, under the same roof which covered the fallen Queen of France. Here

¹ *Camille Desmoulins and His Wife*, Jules* Clarétie, pp. 254, 255.

they spent their last days of life. Here was played the epilogue of that great tragedy.

Lamartine has sketched for us the incidents of the closing scene, and has shown us how well these men knew how to die. "Brissot read to his colleagues the pages in which he bequeathed their justification to posterity. Gensonné preserved the bitterness of his sarcasm, and revenged himself on his enemies by his contempt for them. Lasource illuminated the abysses of anarchy by the fire of his ardent imagination . . . Carra constantly formed new combinations and new divisions of territories between the powers of Europe." Fauchet and Sillery alone returned in face of death to their old creed. "Ducos and Fonfrède, young men whose natural gaiety the gloom of a prison and the approach of death could not damp, wrote verses, affected the light-heartedness of happier times, and only recovered their gravity and regret in the confidences of their heroic friendship, and their mutual apprehension for each other's fall. Valazé looked upon the approach of death as the consummation of the sacrifice he had long since made of his life to his country. He felt that new doctrines must be watered with the blood of their earliest apostles, and he rejoiced at shedding his, for he possessed the fanaticism of devotion and the impatience of martyrdom . . . Vergniaud appeared as careless of the judgment of posterity as of his life. Calm, grave, natural, sometimes mirthful, he never

wrote, and conversed but little. A pilot, torn from the helm during a tempest, he reposed himself on the deep amidst the agitation of the vessel which he no longer governed. His strong mind, whose very strength rendered it sometimes too inactive, and his prophetic yet idle genius, left him but little care for himself. Alone and silent, on his bed or on the spot allotted for exercise, he occasionally illuminated a difficult theme under discussion by one of those flashes of eloquence no less majestic in the dungeon than in the tribune of the Senate . . . Such was Vergniaud in captivity. He only appeared more unmoved than his companions because he was the most reflective and the greatest." "The brother-in-law of Vergniaud, M. Alluaud, came from Limoges to bring him some money, for Vergniaud was in a state of literal destitution. M. Alluaud had brought his son, a child of ten years, whose features recalled to the prisoner those of his beloved sister. The child, seeing his uncle imprisoned like a malefactor, his cheeks sunken, hair in disorder, unshaven, and his garments hanging in tatters, burst into tears and clung to his father's knees. 'My child,' said the captive, taking him on his lap, 'look well at me. When you are a man, you can say that you saw Vergniaud, the founder of the Republic, at the most glorious period and in the most splendid costume he ever wore—that in which he suffered the persecution of wretches, and in which he prepared to die for Liberty.' The child

remembered these words, and repeated them, fifty years afterwards, to the author of this work."¹

At last, on October 26th, the Girondins were led to their trial at the Palais-de-Justice, a dense crowd filling the court, soldiers and cannon guarding the approaches. It seems strange that different histories should give differently the number of the captives, but it is given as twenty, twenty-one, and twenty-two. The last appears to be accurate, for the bill of the grave-digger at the Madeleine runs: "Twenty-two deputies of the Gironde: The coffins, 147 francs; expenses of interment, 63 francs; total, 210 francs." Louis Blanc puts the number at twenty-one, and gives the names as follows: Brissot, Vergniaud, Gensonné, Duperret, Carra, Gardien, Valazé, Jean Duprat, Sillery, Fauchet, Ducos, Fonfrède, Lasource, Beauvais, Duchatel, Mainvielle, Lacaze, Lehardy, Boileau, Antiboul, and Vigée. The *acte d'accusation* of Fouquier-Tinville recounted all the jealousies, all the hates, all the accusations flung at the Girondins by the Montagnards during their long and bitter struggle. It sounded like a copy of the terrible lampoon published by Camille Desmoulins in the previous May, his *Histoire des Brissotins*, a pamphlet of which he boasted that it was "the precursor of the Revolution of May 31st". How far-fetched and cruel were many of the accusations may be judged from Louis Blanc's indignant outburst:

¹ *History of the Girondists*, vol. iii, pp. 169—171.

"Detestable lie, unworthy rage! Amar dared to accuse Brissot of meditating the ruin of our colonies because he had generously laboured for the emancipation of the negroes; of having urged the assassination of the patriots on the Champ de Mars because he was the first to raise the cry of 'Republican' that shook Paris; of having wished to crush the new-born liberty under the weight of an allied universe, because he had declared war against kings! It was an attempt to brand him with those deeds which in history will be his eternal praise."¹

The witnesses called were their bitterest enemies, Pache, Chaumette, Hébert, Destournelles, Chabot, Léonard, Bourdon, Deffieux. The trial went on day after day, and popular feeling began to turn to the side of the accused. Hébert and Chaumette took alarm, and in the Jacobin Club declared that "these scoundrels would escape the sword of justice,"² until they roused the other clubs to send a deputation to the Jacobins, on October 28th, with the question: "What need of witnesses and of forms to try men who should have been at once condemned?" On the following day a deputation was despatched to the Convention itself, and the Convention was weak enough to pass a law (October 29th) permitting the jury to declare themselves satisfied and to close a trial at any moment after

¹ *Histoire de la Révolution*, Louis Blanc, vol. x, p. 578.

² *Ibid.*, p. 579.

it had lasted for three days. Terrible parody of justice, which deprived the accused of his right of full hearing and of defence.

Night after night, on returning to their prison, the Girondins amused themselves by mimicking their own trial. One of them played the part of the accused, and was always condemned and executed, as in gay defiance of the approaching doom. On the morning of the 30th, ere they started for the court, as they felt, for the last time, Valazé presented Riouffe, a friend, with a pair of scissors, saying with a smile of irony that Riouffe understood a few hours afterwards: "This is a dangerous weapon; they are afraid that we may commit suicide." Vergniaud drew from his breast a little phial of poison, which he had carried on his person for five months; there was too little to divide among all his friends, and resolute to share their fate, he threw it away, and turned to go with them to their doom.

Arrived at the court, Fouquier-Tinville demanded that the law passed on the previous day should be put in force. The jury, however, declared that they were not satisfied, and the trial continued until six o'clock, at which hour they rose to consider their verdict. The consideration was brief. The verdict was unanimous. The sentence: Death.

A cry broke the silence of the court. It burst from the lips of Camille Desmoulins: "O my God! my God! it is I who have slain them! My 'Brissot

unveiled ' ! O my God ! it has killed them ! " When the sentence was pronounced there was a dead silence through the crowd, a pause among the condemned. Vergniaud gave no sign ; Carra and Duprat stood unmoved ; Fonfrède and Ducos clasped each other close ; Brissot's head drooped for a moment on his breast, but as Valazé slipped downwards from his seat he bent down quickly : " What, Valazé ! is your courage failing ? " " No," smiled Valazé ; " I am dying." He had concealed a dagger under his coat, and pierced himself to the heart. " We die," spoke up Lasource defiantly, " at a moment in which the people have lost their senses. You will die when they recover them." " We die innocent," they cried as they turned to go. " Long live the Republic."

Back, for the last time, to the gloomy prison of the Conciergerie, and the inmates, listening for their return, heard the silence of the night broken by a well-known refrain, of which one altered word told them of their comrades' fate :

Allons, enfants de la patrie,
Le jour de gloire est arrivé ;
Contre nous de la tyrannie
Le couteau sanglant est levé !

The Girondins, on descending to the large room in which they were to spend their last night, found in it a long table lit with torches, and laden with food and wine and flowers. The gentle forethought of a friend had spread for them this last banquet, as though in memory of those happier days in which

they had gathered with such high hopes, such noble aspirations, round the table presided over by Madame Roland, now, alas! a prisoner like themselves. The same brilliancy, the same wit, the same eloquence, brightened the banquet; but for the draped walls of the *salon* there were the weather-stained stones of the dungeon; for the mirthful presence of Barbaroux there was the silent corpse of Valazé; for the dawn breaking over the tribune of an applauding senate there was the dawn that would light them to the guillotine. Yet the jest sparkled and the wine flowed, as though the darkest hour of the Republic were not nearing with every swing of the pendulum.

After supper the conversation took a graver turn. Brissot spoke of the dangers that menaced France. "How much blood," he said sadly, "will it require to wash out our own!" Vergniaud struck a higher note: "Our blood is sufficiently warm to fertilise the soil of the Republic. Let us not carry away with us the future; but let us bequeath to the people hope in exchange for the death which we shall receive at their hands."¹ Then they debated the question of the immortality of the soul until the day broke, the day of October 31st.

It is eight o'clock, and Abbé Lambert, a friend of Brissot, who has been waiting outside all night, enters, and after embracing Brissot offers him the consolations of religion. Brissot repels him gently:

¹ *History of the Girondists*, Lamartine, vol. iii, pp. 179—184.

"Do you know of anything holier than the death of an honest man, who dies because he has refused to villains the blood of his fellow-men?" Vergniaud, Gensonné, and most of the others refuse in similar fashion, and calmly await the coming doom. At ten o'clock the executioners appear, and prepare them for death, cutting off their hair and binding their arms. Then they walk out to the courtyard where five carts are waiting, and these they mount, the pale corpse of Valazé being placed beside those in one of them, and so fare slowly forward through the crowd. The guillotine is in sight; they stop at the foot of the scaffold; they embrace each other; and hark! strong and full rise the voices on the air:

Allons, enfants de la patrie,
Le jour de mort est arrivé;
Contre nous de la tyrannie
Le couteau sanglant est levé.

The first mounts the ladder, chanting, and as the first head falls one voice is lost in that chorus of the dying. Another and yet another head rolls into the basket, and weaker and weaker, but still steadily, out-rings the battle-song of Freedom. At last but one is left, and one pure clear voice, that has hushed many a crowd into silence, and has swayed thousands by the magic of its eloquence, the voice of Vergniaud, soars upward, as he stands alone, living, amid the one-and-twenty corpses of his friends. Listen! but as you listen silence breaks the melody. Vergniaud is no more. The Gironde is dead.

It was buried beside the monarchy. One grave, dug next to that of Louis XVI, received the bodies of that faithful twenty-two.

Of those scattered fugitive deputies whom we left in the south-west and elsewhere the tale may as well be told briefly here. Louvet escaped, and after many hair-breadth escapes reached Switzerland, he with his faithful wife. In the late autumn of 1794 he returned to Paris and took his seat in the Convention once more, and with him Isnard and Lanjuinais who had likewise escaped, and had found shelter on Swiss soil. Sadder was the fate of the rest.

Rabaut St. Etienne was arrested in Paris on November 23rd, and was guillotined without trial on the following day. Condorcet had escaped from Paris in June, and lay hidden with friends all winter long. During these months of concealment he wrote his celebrated *Esquisse des Progrès de l'Esprit Humain*, a monument of philosophic serenity in the daily presence of death. At last, hearing of many who were condemned to death for concealing the proscribed, he resolved to leave the generous friend on whom he feared to bring destruction. "I must not remain any longer with you," he said to his hostess: "I am *hors la loi*." "But we," was her noble answer, "are not *hors l'humanité*."¹ At the end of March, 1794, he wandered out, tempted by the sunshine, was recognised, chased, and fled to

¹ *History of Europe*, Alison, vol. iii, p. 18.

Clamars : there entering a tavern to get food, he was seized as "suspect," in consequence of the contrast between his disguise as a labourer and the fineness of his linen, was dragged to Bourg-la-Reine, and thrown into prison, there to await enquiry ; quietly during the night he swallowed a dose of poison, which he had carried about with him, concealed on his person, and they who sought their captive in the morning found a corpse. Valadi, separated from Louvet, Guadet, and Sallès, was captured and condemned to death ; pleading his rank as an officer he was spared the guillotine, and was shot in military fashion at Périgueux on December 14th, 1793. Through this same winter of '93-'94 lay concealed Guadet, Sallès, Barbaroux, Buzot, and Pétion, all in the neighbourhood of Bordeaux. Barbaroux, Buzot, and Pétion kept together, but in June, 1794, flying from one place of concealment to another, they saw a crowd of people—"harmless villagers going to a village wake," says Carlyle, but from their subsequent conduct this seems doubtful—and Barbaroux, drawing pistol, shot himself in the mouth and blew away his jaw. Buzot and Pétion escaped, but a few days later a peasant, working in a cornfield, near St. Emilion, found two bodies, half devoured by wolves ; these were, on examination, found to be the remains of the two Girondins, and at the post-mortem held traces of poison were found in the stomachs ; weary of their hupped lives and hopeless of escape, they had sought the shelter

of the grave. Barbaroux, bleeding and speechless, was surrounded by the "harmless villagers" and asked his name. Was he Buzot? He moved his head slightly in denial. Was he Barbaroux? A feeble sign of affirmation came in answer. His questioners thereupon lifted him from the ground and carried him into Bordeaux, where a cure was found for his wound—he was immediately guillotined (June 25th). During the next month Guadet and Sallès were discovered, concealed in a hiding place in a double wall, and they also were carried to Bordeaux, and there promptly guillotined.¹

Two only of the Gironde remain who demand mention at our hands; Roland, escaped and in safe hiding; Jeanne Marie Philpon Roland, his wife, "the heart of the Gironde," in prison since the fatal 31st of May. There she had been employed in writing the famous *Mémoires*, which she left as her last legacy to the world. A pathetic picture has come down to us from one who was allowed to converse with her at the wicket of her prison. "Something more than is usually found in the looks of women painted itself in those large black eyes of hers, full of expression and sweetness. She spoke to me often at the gate; we were all attentive round her, in a sort of admiration and astonishment; she expressed herself with a purity, with a

¹ These details are taken from an Encyclopædia, in which are the biographies of the various Girondins, written by eminent French *littérateurs*.

harmony and prosody that made her language like music, of which the ear could never have enough. Her conversation was serious, not cold; coming from the mouth of a beautiful woman, it was frank and courageous as that of a great man . . . And yet her maid said: 'Before you, she collects her strength; but in her own room, she will sit three hours sometimes leaning on the window, and weeping.'"¹ Strong, sweet, loving nature was that of Roland's heroic wife.

And now in the early days of November the hour has come for her trial, or rather for her condemnation. "Her trial!" says Louis Blanc. "But we have already heard it; it was that of the Girondins." Some of Fouquier-Tinville's questions are aimed at her honour, are "brutal," and stir her from her strong serenity for a passing moment. But she returns to prison with a smile, and after brief delay comes out and mounts the cart of death. She is dressed in white, and her long black hair falls like a cloud around her below her waist. Another victim, named Lamarche, is beside her in the cart and fears the coming doom; he is trembling, faint, heart-broken, and she devotes the last moments of her life to comforting him and cheering him along the road to death. They are at the foot of the ladder which leads to the scaffold, and with a smile of encouragement she motions Lamarche forward;

¹ *Mémoires sur les Prisons*, Riouffe, pp. 55-7. Quoted by Carlyle.

"Go first," she says gently; "you will not have the courage to see me die." Samson, the executioner, interposes; his orders are that she shall be the first. "You will not refuse a woman's last request," she answers sweetly, and Lamarche is spared the agony of looking upon death. Her time has come; near the scaffold rises the great white statue of Liberty, of the goddess she has worshipped all through her noble life. "O Liberty! how many crimes are being wrought in thy name!" and as she speaks she bows low to the imaged symbol, honouring the true Liberty as her blood is being claimed by the false, by the child of past tyranny and of centuries of wrong. And up the ladder passes the white-robed figure, and serenely she stretches herself on the blood-stained plank. The knife falls. Jeanne Marie Roland is of the past. On no purer, no more heroic heart, on no nobler life, did the guillotine of the Reign of Terror confer immortality of fame.

Madame Roland left for her daughter many a loving message, but for her husband she left nothing. "He will not survive me," she said of the man she loved. She judged truly. The news of the execution of November 8th travelled to Rouen, and on the 15th he bade farewell to the friends who had sheltered him for nearly six months, and set off Paris-ward. He walked some four leagues along the road towards the city where lay his wife's body—buried in the common fosse at Clamars—and then stayed his

journey. On the following morning he was found, fallen at the foot of an apple-tree, with a cane-sword through his heart. On his breast, pinned to his coat, was a paper, which bore the following words: "Whosoever thou mayest be who shalt find me lying here, respect my remains; they are those of one who consecrated his life to usefulness, and who died as he lived, upright and virtuous. Not fear but anger drove me from my hiding-place when I heard of the murder of my wife. I can remain no longer on an earth polluted with such crimes."

Turning from the Gironde, we find other notable victims of the Terror, during this gloomy November, 1793. On the 3rd of the month, Philippe d'Orléans, better known as Philippe Egalité, who had been imprisoned at Marseilles for some six months,¹ was brought to Paris, and being there accused of Royalist conspiracy was quickly condemned; he was executed on November 6th, gay and *débonnair* to the last, eating a good breakfast ere he mounted the tumbril, telling the executioner who would have drawn off his boots: "You are losing time; they will come off more easily when I am dead; let us get on."¹

On the 12th, Bailly, the first President of the States-General in May, 1789 (see page 93) Bailly, who led the oath-taking on the famous 20th of June, Bailly, who was elected Mayor of Paris on July 15th, Bailly who was identified with all the early

¹ *Histoire de la Révolution*, Louis Blanc, vol. x, p. 582.

struggles of the Revolution, Bailly was being hooted through Paris streets on his way to the guillotine. To understand the hoots and the curses that were the funeral march of this brave and upright old man, our thoughts must travel backward to July 17th, 1791 (page 169), to that scene on the Champ de Mars when Bailly, carrying a red flag, ordered the crowd to disperse, and the soldiers to fire on the people. This needless massacre—into which Bailly was deceived by pretences of a plot that had no existence, and of which he was to a great extent morally though not legally guiltless—was the accusation brought against him at his trial, on November 10th. He bore himself calmly and with dignity, philosopher to the last. Asked whether he had aught to say against the pronouncement of the death-penalty he answered: "I have always carried out the law; I know how to submit to it, since you are its mouthpiece." He spent the evening of the 11th playing piquet with his nephew, and stopping a moment to take snuff, excused himself smilingly; "To-morrow I shall be deprived of this pleasure, as my hands will be tied behind my back." To a friend who tenderly reproached him with having made him hope for an acquittal: "I was teaching you," he answered, "never to despair of your country's laws."¹

It is difficult to judge of the scene round Bailly's execution, so different are the accounts given.

¹ *Histoire de la Révolution*, Louis Blanc, vol. x, pp. 584, 585.

Lamartine describes it as a very pandemonium ; Carlyle gives a painful picture of it ; Louis Blanc declares that the absolute insults were the work of paid Royalist agents, who looked on Bailly as the criminal who led the Revolution in its early days, and that the crowd, remembering the massacre of July '91, were led by the contagion of example into outrage. It appears certain that when the tumbril arrived at the Champ de Mars, where the sentence was ordered to be executed in memory of the crime it avenged, a cry was raised that the blood of the criminal must not stain the holy soil of the famous plain ; that the guillotine was, consequently, taken to pieces, carried to the riverside, and there re-erected ; that sleet was falling all the time, and that numbed with the cold, the workers were slow at their task ; that thus some hours passed between the time of leaving the Conciergerie and that of the absolute execution. "You are trembling, Bailly," jeered a bystander, as the old man, waiting for slow-paced death, stood bare-headed in the driving sleet. "My friend, I am cold," he answered gently and serenely, and a moment after, all was ready, the red flag was burned before his eyes, and the knife fell. A pitiable scene enough, in truth, and it is surely unnecessary to add to it the horrible fury and brutal outrages described by Alison and by Lamartine. The execution of Bailly appears to have cost Robespierre much distress of mind. Duplay, one of the judges who had condemned him, was checked

by Robespierre when he began to explain "why he had not absolved him. 'Do not speak of it,' replied Robespierre. 'I do not call you to account for your sentence; the Republic will ask that of your conscience.' That evening he remained gloomily shut up in his room, and received none of his friends."

Barnave and Duport, Generals Houchard, Biron, and Beauharnais—husband of that Josephine Beauharnais who was to be the Empress of France, and the mate of Napoleon Buonaparte—died upon the scaffold before the year was out. There also fell the unpitied head of Madame du Barry, the last recognised mistress of foul Louis XV; Lamartine draws for us her progress to the guillotine: "She did not cease to invoke pity in the most humiliating terms. Tears flowed incessantly from her eyes upon her bosom. Her piercing cries prevailed over the noise of the wheels and the clamour of the multitude. It seemed as if the knife struck this woman beforehand, and deprived her a thousand times of life. 'Life! life!' she cried. 'Life for my repentance! life for all my devotion to the Republic! life for all my riches to the nation!' The people laughed and shrugged their shoulders. They showed her, by signs, the pillow of the guillotine, upon which her charming head was about to sleep. The passage of the courtesan to the scaffold was but one lamentation. Under the knife she still wept. The court had enervated her soul. She alone, amongst

¹ *Life of Robespierre* G. H. Lewes, p. 314.

all the women executed, died a coward, because she died neither for opinion, for virtue, nor for love, but for vice. She dishonoured the scaffold as she had dishonoured the throne." ¹

During these months of the dying year, while the Terror reigned in Paris, the Convention was steadily discussing social and political reforms, and was issuing decrees which remodelled the public life of France. "The taxes were proportioned to riches. The indigent were sacred. The infirm were alleviated. Children without parents were adopted by the Republic. Illicit maternity was rescued from shame, which kills the infant by dishonouring the mother. The liberty of conscience was proclaimed. Universal morality was taken as a type of the laws. Slavery and negro commerce were abolished. The conscience of the human race was invoked as a supreme law. A series of philanthropic and popular measures instituted political charity in action, as a treaty of alliance between the rich and the poor. Social power was equally dispersed amongst all citizens. Elementary and transcendent instruction, like a divine debt, distributed its light through the depths of the population. The love of the people seemed to expand itself in every jurisdiction of the administration. One felt that the Revolution had not been made to usurp, but to lavish power, morality, equality, justice, and well-being upon the masses. . . . Men ask themselves involuntarily

¹ *History of the Girondists*, vol. ili, p. 288.

wherefore this social contrast between the social laws of the Convention and its political measures—between this philosophy and this blood? It was because the social laws of the Convention emanated from its dogmas, and that its political acts emanated from its wrath. The one were its principles, the other its passions.”¹

Louis Blanc gives a full account of these labours ;² they included the bases of a compulsory, free, and common education ; the establishment of the École Polytechnique and the École normale of the Conservatoire and the Institut ; the setting up of telegraphic means of communication ; the inauguration of the decimal system, and of the uniformity of weights and measures.

One of the works accomplished was a curious one, and one that now causes much tearing of hair to the student of the Revolution ; it was nothing less than the making of a new calendar. This calendar was formed by Romme, aided by Mouge, Lagrange, and Fabre d'Eglantine, and on October 5th it was decreed. The new era dated from the birth of the French Republic, on September 21st, 1792, and thus began with September 22nd, 1792. The year was divided into twelve months of thirty days each, and at the end of these, five festival days completed the 365. Once in four years a sixth was added. Each month of thirty days was composed

¹ *History of the Girondists*, vol. iii, pp. 294, 296.

² *Histoire de la Révolution*, vol. x, chap. 12.

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of three decades. The names of the months were all founded on agricultural operations. The autumn months were : October, *Vendémiaire*, the month of grape-harvest ; November, *Brumaire*, that of mists ; December, *Frimaire*, that of frost. Winter had : January, *Nivose*, the month of snow ; February, *Pluviose*, that of rain ; March, *Ventose*, that of wind. Spring consisted of : April, *Germinal*, the germinating ; May, *Floréal*, the flowery ; June, *Prairial*, the hay-meadow month. Summer had : July, *Messidor*, the harvest-time ; August, *Thermidor*, the hot ; September, *Fructidor*, the ripening of the fruits. In order to find easily the parallel dates in old and new style, Carlyle constructed a useful table, which I here append :

To the number of the day in			Add		We have the number of the day in
	Vendémiaire	...	21		September
	Brumaire	.	21		October
	Frimaire	..	20		November
	Nivose	.	20		December
	Pluviose	...	19		January
	Ventose		18		February
	Germinal	...	20		March
	Floréal	.	19		April
	Prairial	...	19		May
	Messidor	...	18		June
	Thermidor	...	18		July
	Fructidor	...	17		August

The months will of course overlap ; thus the 29th Thermidor will be the 47th July, *i.e.*, the 16th

August, and so on. After Fructidor 30th (September 16th) came the Five Sanculottides, or festival days: September 17th was the feast of Genius; 18th, of Labour; 19th, of Actions; 20th, of Rewards; 21st, of Opinion; in Leap Year, the extra day was the feast of the Revolution. The decade had names less poetical; mere primidi, duodi, tridi, quartidi, quintidi, sextidi, septidi, octidi, nonidi, decadi—first, second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth, tenth—the tenth being the Day of Rest. This nomenclature began on October 25, 1793—Frimaire 4, year 2—and lasted until January 1st, 1806.

Lastly, in this brief sketch of the legislative reforms carried out by the Convention during the Terror, must be noted the bases of the so-called *Code Napoléon*, which were laid in the committees appointed by the Convention from its own members, on administration, finance, criminal, civil, and rural codes. On the work done by these Lamartine strongly insists. "Special men of the Convention," he writes, "prepared the plans of these legislations upon the bases of philosophy, of science, and of equality—bases laid down by the Constituent Assembly. These ideas, of which afterwards the organising despotism of Napoleon availed itself, and to which he only gave his name, had all been conceived, elaborated, or promulgated by the Convention. Napoleon unjustly robbed it of its glory. History must not sanction these larcenies. She

must restore them to the Republic. The fruits of philosophy and liberty will never appertain to despotism. The men whom Napoleon called into his councils, there to prepare his frame-works—Cambacères, Siéyès, Carnot, Thibaudeau, Merlin, etc.—sprung from the committees. Like unfaithful workmen, they bore off into these workshops of servitude the instruments and *chefs d'œuvre* of liberty."

The Convention beside the Terror ! The vengeance for the Past beside the promise for the Future ! Strange contrast of Death and of New Birth ! If only any had been found strong enough to control, to guide, to enlighten the masses suddenly freed from the yoke of horrible oppression, intoxicated with the feeling of their strength, wild with the fear of falling back under the old tyranny, the Terror would never have stained with blood and tears the pure white statue of Liberty. The Girondins were too much out of sympathy with the uneducated ; the Montagnards too much the reflex of the Paris streets ; Danton was too fitful, too uncertain ; Robespierre too narrow and too weak. None of these was able to be the ruler of the Revolution triumphant ; one after another they became its victims, and the Revolution in slaying them plunged its sword into its own bosom, like the parent who falls, self-slain, on the corpses of his murdered children.

LECTURE XII

THE HÉBERTISTES

WE have now arrived at the part of the French Revolution which has been most persistently and most seriously misrepresented, and which has been continually used by reactionaries —both political and religious—as an argument against Republicanism, and against Atheism. It is necessary to clearly define the parties engaged in the religious struggle, which culminated in the later part of 1793 and in the earlier months of 1794, so that we may see what parts were played in the Revolution by Christianity, (as represented by Roman Catholicism), by Atheism, by non-Christian Theism, and by mere blind revolt against everything which revived the memory of an evil past.¹

The tyranny, the awful cruelty, the vice of the Roman Church in France, were among the causes of the Revolution ; the cardinal and the bishop were the supporters of the Royal shield, and every wrong on the people inflicted by a despotic monarch found its apologist and its justifier in the priest ; for the

¹ *History of the Girondists*, vol. ili, p. 296.

cruelty, read the extracts from Quick's *Synodicon*, quoted by Buckle, or even the brief statement made in the first of these lectures (p. 9); remember the awful story of the torture of Lescuyer (p. 177) on October 16th, 1791; you cannot judge of the party of mere revolt, unless you know something of the horrors wrought by the Church in France, unless you realise that it was the child of bitterest memory, of inexpressible wrong, and was largely inspired, not only by revenge for the past, but by mad terror of a possible revival in the future, if the "Infamous," denounced by Voltaire, could not be so trampled under foot that the very life would be crushed out of it for evermore. The civil constitution of the Gallican Church (voted by the Assembly, in October, 1789, and imposed on the clergy peremptorily in November, 1790, see pages 143-45, and 159), had been bitterly resented by the higher officials, whose salaries it cut down, and whose state it diminished; they saw in a Royalist restoration the only hope of their own triumph, and were engaged incessantly in intrigues against the struggling Republic. Those of the clergy who had accepted the constitution and had sworn allegiance thereto—the "constitutional clergy," as they were called, in opposition to the non-juring priests, who remained faithful to the Pope—were ostracised by the more orthodox Roman Catholics, and regarded with suspicion by the Republicans, with whom they outwardly allied themselves. The enormous

majority of the priests repudiated the oath they had taken of allegiance to the Constitution, when the oath was condemned by Rome as an act of schism, and in the struggle we may practically ignore the constitutional clergy. In this we have opposed to each other, Rome—with the old French monarchy—and the Republic.

The Atheistic party, the party of philosophic Free-thought, the bases of which were laid by the Encyclopædists, was the party of the Gironde. It included a few of the more thoughtful of the non-Christian Theists, such as Thomas Paine, but is best typified from the philosophic side in such a man as Condorcet. This party guided the Revolution in its earlier stages, and left its imperishable record in the legislative reforms carried out by the Assembly, and by the Convention. The noblest work of the Revolution—the overthrow of the ancient monarchical tyranny, the destruction of feudalism, the restoration of the land to the nation, the founding of Republican institutions through the length and breadth of France, these things were done under the leadership of the Gironde, with the active co-operation and aid of the nobler minds of the Montagne. The Gironde, as we have seen, disappeared from the Convention ere 1793 had run half its course, and only the basest malice or the most profound ignorance can ascribe the bloodshed of the Reign of Terror to the party which was among its earliest victims, which was essentially the party

of reasoned Free-thought, which was the child of the sceptical philosophy of the eighteenth century.

The non-Christian Theistic party was, roughly speaking, that of the Montagne ; the more serene and philosophical minds in it tended towards the Gironde ; the more passionate and impracticable were fired with the theories of government of Jean Jacques Rousseau, and it was these that ultimately dominated the Montagnard policy, and the attempt to realise these at any immediate cost was largely responsible for the executions of the Reign of Terror. The motives of the leaders of the Montagne were noble, their methods constantly mistaken ; they panted for universal brotherhood, for peace and concord, for equality and liberty, and, as we have seen, they incorporated those yearnings in their legislation, in which, indeed, they and the Gironde were almost at one. But, not strong enough to be just, terrified at the perils which menaced Liberty with destruction, and resolute, at every cost, to save France to Freedom, though their every step should be stained with blood, they made the mistake of weakness and became cruel, and so slew Liberty and rendered the Empire possible. From June, 1793, to July, 1794, the Montagne dominated the Convention and controlled the Committee of Public Safety. The responsibility for the bloodshed of the Reign of Terror rests in reality on this latter body ; but to the Reign of Terror, to the bloodshed which stained it, and to the excuse—not the

justification—which may be offered for it, we shall recur later. To-night our work is concerned with the struggle that ended in the execution of the fourth of the parties I have named, on March 24, 1794. In this, the sections of the Montagne that followed Robespierre and Danton were united; Louis Blanc epitomises these divisions as follows: "One word describes Hébertisme: it was Terror. The Robespierristes opposed to it the word Justice; the Dantonistes the word Mercy."¹

This party of blind revolt and fear, rather than of principle, the fourth, as outlined above, is commonly known as the Hébertiste, from one of its leaders, Hébert, the editor and writer of the famous—or rather infamous—journal, *Père Duchesne*. This journal appeared in January, 1791; it was issued from the printing press of Tremblay, Rue Barse, Porte-St. Denis, three times a week, and ran to 355 numbers. Two other journals of the same name were edited by Lemaire; the first of these was published about the middle of 1790, and of this 400 issues are in existence; the second had 147 issued during 1792 and 1793.² All these journals are vile and obscene in the highest degree. It is said that the oaths and filthiness which disfigure Hébert's journal were introduced because the Royalists were circulating among the troops filthy papers which were intended to convey Royalist views, and that Hébert only met

¹ *Histoire de la Révolution*, vol. xi, p. 664.

² See *Histoire des Journaux*, vol. i, pp. 533—535.

them on their own ground. It may be so. Let who will use filth in support of royalty, but let no true soldier of Liberty bring to the shrine of the Republic an unclean gift.

Prominent in this party—which for a time entirely controlled the Commune of Paris, but was almost powerless in the Convention—we find Chaumette, Ronsin, Fouché, Carrier, and Collot d'Herbois, names which recall the most awful scenes of the people arisen to revenge.

Of these, Chaumette is the most perplexing figure, so evil in many of his acts, so noble in many others, and the mist and the dust of that time of whirling passions make it impossible to see the interweaving links, and to trace the clear outline of the character, the fruits of which were of such strangely different kinds. Chaumette obtained the abolition of corporal punishment in schools, denounced prostitution, and closed all houses of ill-fame, put down the sale of indecent books and pictures, opened daily to the public the libraries which were used to be open for two hours in the week, ordered that separate beds should be given to the poor in hospitals, in which they had hitherto been crowded together five and six on one couch, had a separate hospital opened for lying-in women, alleviated the treatment of the insane, commanded that similar and honoured burial should be given to poor and to rich alike, and that a flag should be carried before the corpse bearing the inscription: "The good man

never dies; he lives in the memory of his fellow-citizens."¹ Yet this same man was the suggester of some of the most pitiless revolutionary acts, and it was he who put to the young daughter of Marie Antoinette odious and suggestive questions touching the honour of her mother. Taking him as a whole, he is far too noble for the party with which he is generally identified, and while working with it in much, he did not share its wild excesses and its brutal cruelty.

Ronsin, whilom an actor, had been made general of the "revolutionary army," a terrible band, six thousand strong, composed of the lowest dregs of the Parisian population, and formed to rush over France from one end to the other, carrying with it a portable guillotine, directing its operations towards any place where was discovered a Royalist plot, a conspiracy against the Revolution. Only such towns, however, were the scenes of the slaughter which it wrought. It will be remembered that the Royalists at Lyons had raised the city in rebellion (p. 326), had set up a congress, and had executed Jacobin functionaries. Dubois-Crancé and Gauthier had been sent thither at the beginning of May, 1793, to besiege the town, and for months were held in check, Précý, the Royalist commandant, and his colleagues hoping that they would be able to hold

¹ *Histoire de la Révolution*, Louis Blanc, vol. x, p. 588. And *Camille Desmoulins and His Wife*, Jules Clarétie, pp. 260, 261.

the place until the invaders reached and relieved the town. At last, on October 2nd, Couthon, the friend of Robespierre, arrived with reinforcements ; on the 7th he summoned the city to submit ; on the 8th, the people, starving, clamoured for the admission of the Republican troops ; on the 9th Pr  cy left the town with his Royalist army, and on the same day Couthon entered, bringing provisions, which he had been collecting in all directions for the relief of the famishing townfolk. One beautiful fact has come down to us of that entry ; the troops, hearing on the 8th that Lyons had resolved to submit, and that her citizens were starving, only ate half their own rations that day, and carried the other half into the town to give to those who for six months had been resisting them as foes, but who had now yielded to the Republic. Before entering the town Couthon made his soldiers swear to respect property, and as soon as he was established therein he issued a proclamation announcing that any soldier found pillaging would be shot within twenty-four hours, and that no employment of arbitrary force would be permitted. Alas ! in Paris, in the Committee of Public Safety, the conciliatory policy towards Lyons of Couthon, of Saint-Just, and of Robespierre was overborne by Carnot, Prieur, and others, who feared lest the Royalist party in Lyons, left unpunished, should serve as a focus of intrigue, and as a *point-d'appui* for the invading armies. A decree was passed on October 12th, and forwarded to

Couthon, commanding that the counter-revolutionaries should be tried by martial law, that Lyons should be destroyed, and that on its ruins should be erected a column, bearing the inscription : " Lyons made war on liberty ; Lyons is no more." Couthon outwardly accepted the decree, but practically made it inoperative ; then, finding that he was being accused of lukewarmness, he obtained permission to return to Paris, and on October 30th, Collot d'Herbois and Fouché entered Lyons, as " the messengers of death ".¹

Ronsin and his army reached Lyons on November 25th, and the work began. On the following day the trial of all accused citizens was placed in the hands of a committee of seven ; on December 4th, sixty persons, condemned to death, were ranged between two long ditches, dug in the plain *des Brotteaux*, a double line of soldiers was drawn up, cannon were placed at each end, and discharged against the rows of the condemned. Some fell dead, others wounded ; the survivors were dispatched with swords ; a horrible massacre. That many of these were guilty is true ; Louis Blanc well says : " Among these victims, and the victims of the following days, were those who, in the expedition of Montbrison, had hung Republicans from their own windows, or plunged whole families without food into the subterranean caves of Pierre-Seise, or burned cottages and harvests . . . who,

¹ *Histoire de la Révolution*, Louis Blanc, vol. x, chap. viii.

during the siege, in violation of accepted treaties, had mown down with grape-shot disarmed Republican soldiers. But summary judgments are not judgments, and justice ceases to be justice, when it becomes ferocious and vindictive." ¹ Two hundred and ten were shot down in similar fashion on December 5th, and in two other executions on December 8th and 11th, an additional fifty-nine. Twenty-one heads fell on the scaffold. At the end of December Collot d'Herbois left Lyons for Paris, hearing of the danger which menaced him for his cruelty. Fouché soon followed him, and going to Robespierre—to whose sister Charlotte he was engaged—Robespierre passionately reproached him, and when Fouché pleaded circumstances, hotly answered that nothing could justify such cruelty, and broke off the marriage contract there and then. The arrest of Ronsin was decreed in Paris, on the denunciation of his cruelties by Fabre d'Eglantine, December 17th, and he was promptly thrown into prison, with Vincent, general secretary of war.

Carrier had been an attorney, and was sent to Nantes in the middle of October, 1793, when the town was a centre of Royalist intrigue. At the end of August the chiefs of the Vendée had entered into alliance with England, then the most dangerous enemy of France. The soldiers whom we saw set free from Mayence (pp. 328—330) arrived at Nantes,

¹ *Histoire de la Révolution*, vol. xi, p. 656.

to proceed to the subjugation of La Vendée under four generals, of whom Kleber led the vanguard. Ronsin had been in La Vendée as "general minister" for some months, acting in close accord with Rossignol, and between him and Philippeaux, the envoy of the Convention at Nantes, there was bitter antagonism. After long struggle, after many alternations of victory and of defeat, the Republic triumphed on the 17th October at Chollet, and on the 18th some 80,000 Vendéans, hopeless, desperate, had gathered on the banks of the Loire, near St. Laurent, and had crossed the river into Brittany. Carrier arrived at Nantes just at this moment; the awful cruelties of the Royalists had driven the inhabitants half mad with revenge and with the fear of their return; the Vendéans had "poured out, drop by drop, the blood of their Republican prisoners; had buried some alive, heaping hundreds together in the wells; some were nailed to the doors of their houses, some suspended by the feet from trees, and then cartridges were stuffed into their mouths, and set alight".¹ Small wonder that the vengeance was mad which answered the provocal, and unhappily Carrier was a man to excite rather than to stem it. One of his first acts was to form the "Company of Marat," whose duty it was to arrest the suspect. Then, as swiftest way of dealing with Royalists and conspirators, he bade the Company of Marat "deport them" down the Loire,

¹ *Histoire de la Révolution*, Louis Blanc, vol. xi, p. 658.

and when midway fasten down the hatches, scuttle the boat and leave it to sink, "vertical deportation," he styled it with horrible cynicism. Finding this fashion costly in boats, he improved upon it, by having trapdoors that opened and let the condemned fall through, till the news of the *noyades* of Nantes reached Paris, and Carrier was summoned back thither, to answer for his crimes.

For these cruelties no justification can be attempted, but the reason for them should be understood. They were wrought in fierce retaliation for worse cruelties inflicted by Royalists and Romanists, and in mad fear of a return of the old tyranny. The priests at Nantes were objects of special hatred, not because they were theologians, but because they were the leading conspirators against the Republic, and the agents in the worst scenes of torture inflicted by the Vendéans on Repulicans.

Anacharsis Clootz, who, as a friend of Chaumette, has been confused with the Hébertiste party and who shared their fate, was a clear and reasoned thinker, whose enthusiastic dream of a universal Republic—so mocked at by Carlyle—shall yet be realised on earth. His theology has been sketched for us by himself: "There is but one Eternal, the Universe. By adding an incomprehensible *Theos* to an incomprehensible *Cosmos* you double the difficulty without solving it. It is said: 'All work implies a workman.' Yes! but I deny that the

Universe is a work; I contend it is an eternal existence."¹

You will remember the trumpet-call sent out by the Convention at the end of August, calling on France to rise and to save itself from the invading kings. During October, the Commune had sent out through the country ardent messengers for aid, who were charged to incite the people to give to the service of the armies on the frontier all the wealth that could be spared in defence of the Fatherland, and to point out to them that the churches had bells which could be cast into cannon, leaden vessels which could be cast into bullets, gold and silver that would replenish the Mint, and that dead saints had jewels and treasures which might save living Frenchmen from a slavery that would be worse than death. In answer, from every part of France, during the autumn, came pouring into Paris the riches amassed in the churches during centuries of superstition. In October the gorgeous Royal sanctuary of St. Denis was stripped of its vast wealth. The tombs of the kings and queens of France were broken open, the bodies buried in quicklime in a common grave, and the jewels taken away. Alison says indignantly: "The whole jewellery, plate, and treasures found in the treasury of St. Denis, and all the other churches in France, as well as what had been extracted from the tombs,

¹ *Basees constitutionnelles de la République du Genre humain*, Cloutz; quoted by Louis Blanc.

were brought in great pomp to the Convention, where they were poured out in confusion on the floor, amidst deafening acclamations of *Vive la République*." ¹ Well, and to what better use could these things be put than to the defence of the free soil of France? Should dead kings keep treasures, while living men fight for a Republic? On the 1st November a deputation from Nevers, brought up and presented to the Convention, crosses of gold, jewelled mitres and coronets, seventeen trunks packed with church vessels, and a basin filled with double louis d'or. Fouché had been the commissary to Nevers, and it was he who had carried thither the famous and most poetical suggestion of the Paris Commune: "Henceforth let the resting-place of the dead be isolated from the abodes of the living, and let it be planted with trees, in the midst of which shall be placed a statue of Sleep. Over the portal of the place of rest, let these words be written: 'Death is an eternal sleep.'" ²

On the 7th November, Gobel, the bishop of Paris, appeared at the bar, accompanied by some of his clergy, by Chaumette, Pache, Momoro, and others, and publicly renounced the exercise of his religious functions. This abdication of the priestly office was followed by many others, made with much theatrical posturing and needless display. At last Chaumette, who seems to have been attracted by

¹ *History of Europe*, vol. iii, p. 21.

² *Histoire de la Révolution*, Louis Blanc, vol. x, p. 588.

the beauty of the old Pagan processions and festivals, and to have feared lest the people should miss the mummeries of Rome, resolved that he would have a grand "Feast of Reason," and an allegorical procession. The idea put poetically by the President of the Convention was turned into an absolute demonstration. He had said: "These sacerdotal toys insulted the Supreme Being. He desires no other worship than that of Reason. That will be henceforth the national religion."¹ Chaumette must needs forthwith personify Reason, and offer homage to the personification. A foolish piece of burlesque, childish and harmless enough in itself; had it been performed on the stage of an opera house in peaceful times, no particular harm would have been done, but it was a most mischievous and fatal blunder, performed in the midst of the terrible realities of November '93, on the world-stage of the French Revolution. In the cathedral of Notre Dame was raised a mound, on which was perched the temple of Reason, lighted with the torch of Truth. As the municipal authorities marched forward in procession Liberty (in the shape of a pretty woman) came out of the temple, and young girls, white-robed and oak-crowned, surrounded her and sang a hymn to Liberty, written for the occasion by Chénier. Then they all marched off towards the Convention, and they bore in an oaken-wreathed palanquin an actress, Mdle. Maillard, who, clad in celestial blue,

¹ *History of the Girondins*, Lamartine, vol. iii, p. 301.

personated the goddess of Reason. Arrived at the Convention Chaumette made an ecstatic speech, presenting his emblematic goddess, and making Reason itself irrational and contemptible by his childish mummary and folly. Then followed a number of similar celebrations, carried on in various churches, with the inevitable results of drunkenness and disorder, creating endless public scandals and regrettable scenes of mad excitement. The church of St. Eustache was turned into an eating-house, others into markets. These facts are pointed at as signs of the depravity of the revolutionary Parisians. Yet Cromwell stabled his horses in the cathedrals ; he destroyed the carven images of saints and heroes far more extensively than did the Hébertistes, as may be seen by a comparison of English cathedrals and Paris churches to-day. Let us be frank. All such actions are regrettable, and are the result of mere reaction, not of wisdom ; they grow out of the excesses of past superstition, and are the inevitable result of the breaking of priestly tyranny. The more prolonged and the more brutal the tyranny, the greater the excesses of the newly freed.

Robespierre, from the very first, set his face sternly against these follies. When Chaumette and his procession came into the hall of Convention, he turned away and continued his work, and after a while rose angrily and retired from the Chamber with Saint-Just. On the 21st November

he protested openly in the Jacobin Club: "What right have men, hitherto unknown in the Revolution, to come into the midst of you, to seek in passing events false popularity, to hurry on patriots to fatal measures, and to throw among them the seeds of trouble and discord? By what right do they disturb the existing worship in the name of Liberty, and attack fanaticism by fanaticism of another kind? By what right will they degrade the solemn homage offered to truth into an eternal and ridiculous farce?"¹

On December 5th he attacked the Hébertistes from the tribune of the Assembly. "You must," he said, "prevent extravagances, and follies which coincide with the plans of foreign conspiracy. You must forbid private authorities; you must forbid the Commune to serve our enemies by thoughtless measures, and must let no armed force interfere in matters of religious opinion."² And the Convention thereupon decreed that all violence and all measures contrary to liberty of worship were forbidden.

Robespierre's attempt to check what Danton—who had returned to Paris—described as "ultra-revolutionary measures," was aided by Danton and his friends, especially by Camille Desmoulins and by Fabre d'Eglantine. On the same day on which Robespierre prayed the Convention to interpose its

¹ *Life of Robespierre*, George Lewes, p. 818.

² *Révolution Française*, Mignet, vol. ii, p. 38.

authority to stop the excesses of the Commune, Camille Desmoulins issued the first number of the *Vieux Cordelier* (its last was dated 15 Pluviose, An. 2; 15 Feb., 1794), the famous paper which pleaded for clemency in the midst of the Terror, and which led its eloquent author to the guillotine. Keen was the strife between the *Vieux Cordelier* and *Père Duchesne*, between Camille and Hébert. Hébert struck with a clumsy club, Camille pierced with a stiletto keen and sharp. He transfixed the Hébertistes, he stabbed the leaders of the Terror. Irony, sarcasm, keen, bitter raillery, these were his weapons, and he used them with terrible effect. He denounced the "Law of the Suspect" under the cloak of Tacitus; he mocked at the liberty which was "a nymph of the opera"; he cried for "a committee of mercy" among the many committees who punished and who avenged. Terrible was his onslaught on Hébert: "Do you not know, Hébert, that when the tyrants of Europe wish to vilify the Republic, to make their slaves believe that France is covered with the darkness of barbarism, that Paris, the city of Attic glory and taste, is peopled with Vandals, they insert fragments of your writings in their newspapers? As if the people were as ignorant and as stupid as you would have Mr. Pitt believe them to be; as if no one could speak to him but in language like yours; as if such were the speech of the Convention and of the Committee of Public Safety; as if your filthiness were the

nation's; as if a Paris sewer were the Seine!"¹ "Saint-Just," laughed Camille lightly, "thinks so much of himself, that he carries his head on his shoulders as if it were the Sacred Host." "And I," retorted Saint-Just, when he read the gibe, "may make him carry his like St. Denis" (who walked to Paris with his head under his arm, the legends say).

The first of those against whom Camille levelled his arrows was Anacharsis Clootz. On the 17th December—Camille had attacked him in the second number of the *Vieux Cordelier*, issued December 10th—Robespierre demanded that he should be put through a long interrogatory at the Jacobin Club; the interrogatory resulted in his most unfair expulsion from that body, suspected as a German, as a noble (he was a baron), as a wealthy man. But Camille soon found that he himself was challenged by the same society, and that his plea for mercy had drawn on him suspicion of disloyalty to the Revolution. On January 7th, 1794, Camille enters the club, excited and eager, protesting that he is accused, that he is calumniated, that he has been deceived. Robespierre interposes—for at heart he is attached to the witty pamphleteer—and subtly attempts to save Camille by condemning his journal. He rallies him gently on his naïveté: his writings must be condemned indeed, but they should be separated from himself. He is a spoilt child, meaning well, but led astray by bad companions. "Let

¹ *Camille Desmoulins and His Wife*, Jules Claretie, p. 271.

us deal harshly with these numbers," he adds, "which Brissot himself would not have ventured to acknowledge ; but let us keep him among us. For the sake of example, however, I demand that these papers of Camille be burnt before the society." Camille's quick pride starts up at the half-patronising, half-disdainful tone of Robespierre, and hotly he answers : " Well said, Robespierre. But I answer like Rousseau : ' Burning is not answering.' " Startled by the sharp retort, so unexpected and, from Robespierre's point of view, so unfair, he answers as sharply, and the sudden quarrel rages hot. Danton checks it, with a plea for justice and calmness : " In judging Camille, beware lest you strike a dangerous blow at the liberty of the press."

For the moment, the expulsion is averted ; but the Hébertistes redouble their efforts, hoping to entangle Robespierre by his defence of Camille ; on the 10th he is actually expelled, but the expulsion is promptly recalled, thanks to the loyal efforts of his friend.

And now broke out the final struggle between the Hébertistes and the party of Robespierre, for the time had come when they must be destroyed, or they would destroy the Revolution. Vincent and Ronsin had been arrested, as we have seen, on the denunciation of Fabre d'Eglantine, but freed when the latter—on an apparently fabricated accusation—had been in turn thrown into prison, and they were escorted home by their friends in triumph.

Robespierre, on February 5th, attacked again in the Convention "those who would change Liberty into a Bacchante"; and the Hébertistes appeared to have considered that the time had come for open struggle, if they were not tamely to submit to extinction. Ronsin's old soldiers of the "revolutionary army" were ready to follow him at his command whither he would; Robespierre and Couthon both fell ill; Carrier had reached Paris, recalled from Nantes on account of the butcheries he had committed there, and had arrived furious against Robespierre, who had demanded his recall. It is hard to say whether, under such circumstances, the party of Robespierre, suddenly deprived of its leader, would have held its own had not Saint-Just unexpectedly returned, and the 26th of February saw him once more in the tribune of the Assembly—cold, stern, harsh as ever, denouncing the plea for mercy which had come from Camille, and justifying the action of the Committee of Public Safety. Though startled at the sudden appearance of this terrible foe, it was too late for the Hébertistes to withdraw from the struggle they had challenged, and to delay the outbreak until Robespierre recovered might be to lose all.

On the 4th of March the Club of the Cordeliers is in uproar. Carrier is there, crying: "They who deserve the guillotine wish to abolish it. Insurrection! insurrection!" Hébert is there, denouncing Amar and Westermann; he, too, ending with the

cry, "Insurrection!" Out of the club into the streets; but Paris is quiet, the Commune indifferent; declaring at the Hôtel de Ville that they will keep the Declaration of the Rights of Man crape-covered till the people's enemies shall be exterminated, they meet with a freezing reception. "Chaumette says a few evasive words; Pache is absent." ¹ Collot d'Herbois, one of the Hébertiste members of the Committee of Public Safety, alarmed at these excesses, makes a vain effort to interpose and to bring about a reconciliation, but it is too late. On March 13th Saint-Just denounces the leading Hébertistes from the tribune of the Assembly, and during the night they are arrested and thrown into the Conciergerie. A few days afterwards Chaumette follows them, as the friend and superior officer of Hébert, and Anacharsis Clootz shares the same fate, the accusation against him being the monstrous one that he had been seeking in the list of emigrants the name of a lady in whom he was interested, who had gone to England.

The trial of the prisoners begins on the 20th March, and lasts three days, being closed at the end of the third day by that very law which Hébert had obtained for the destruction of the Girondins on October 29th, 1793. A strange motley crew they are, the group which stands on trial there. Hébert, Vincent, Ronsin, Momoro, Manuel, and some lesser ones of their party; Kock, a Dutch banker, a friend

¹ *Histoire de la Révolution*, Louis Blanc, vol. x, p. 697.

of Hébert ; Ducroquet, a thief ; Laboureaux, acquitted because he was only among the Hébertistes as a spy ; Clootz, accused that he had a friend among the emigrants and of naught else. On all, except Laboureaux and a woman who claims to be *enceinte*, the death penalty falls ; and on the following day, March 24th, they also pass on tumbrils through the streets guillotine-wards. Small pity need follow any of them, save, indeed, Anacharsis Clootz, unjustly and cruelly condemned ; they had soiled the Revolution ; they had incited to bloodshed and to anarchy ; they had mocked at the sufferings of the victims. Let them go ; no meaner lives have gone down stained into Hades.

The executions of the 24th March were swiftly followed by the destruction of the brutal Hébertiste policy. The "revolutionary army" was disbanded, the Commune reconstituted. Never let it be forgotten, to the honour of Robespierre, that when all others hesitated, he faced the party which committed the worst atrocities of the Revolution, recalled those who in the provinces were shaming France, and drove their policy to the guillotine. A claim is made by Louis Blanc for the Revolution, to which we must give glad assent, that the Revolution smote the unfaithful servants who dishonoured her, while Royalism encouraged and sanctioned butcheries. When on May 15th, 1795, there was a massacre at Lyons of the whole mass of Republican prisoners, the agents were acquitted, and were crowned with

flowers at the theatre. At Aix, all the Republican prisoners were murdered, the prison being set on fire to light the massacre. At Tarascon eighty-nine Republican prisoners were murdered (May 28th and June 20th, 1795), one fashion of slaughter being to carry the prisoners, men, women, and children, to the top of a tower, and then to prick them with bayonets till they leapt into the air and perished. At Marseilles, June 5th, 1795, the dungeons were cleared, some by lighting in them piles of straw mixed with sulphur, others by discharging grape-shot into them.¹ Enough of such horrors! though they might be continued by the page. Royalist and Christian historians have expiated on the "Red Terror," and have drawn a veil over the butcheries of the "White". Posterity will condemn both, but will find more excuse for the revenge of the oppressed in revolt, than for the brutality of the oppressors.

For a rest from these weary tales of internal discord and agony, let us turn to the frontiers, and see how the Convention met the foreign foe. You remember that Valenciennes was in the hands of the Duke of York; that the Prince of Coburg was master of the frontier forty leagues from Paris; that the Piedmontese were advancing towards Lyons, the Spaniards towards Roussillon; that Toulon was in the hands of the English; that everywhere the troops of the Republic, half-naked, barefooted, badly fed, badly generalled, were being

¹ *Histoire de la Révolution*, Louis Blanc, vol. xi, p. 646.

rolled back by the triumphant coalition of kings. And you remember how at the call of the Convention, at the end of August, fourteen armies sprang from the towns and villages of France, and hurled themselves against the foe. (Page 336.)

And now begins that extraordinary last struggle for life between the Republic of France and crowned Europe in arms. Three representatives of the Convention start off to each general, to advise, to watch, and on his loyalty to report. Determined iron men most of these, girt with tricolour scarf, and wearing tricolour plume, marking them out to the enemy, as ready to die as the boldest, resolute only not to fail. Carnot, in Paris, was the head that planned, the commissioners, with the armies, his voice and his hands. He it was who gathered up his troops, flung them with lightning speed on detached bodies of the enemy one after another, disregarded all the rules of the accepted tactics of war, and bewildered his foes ere he swooped upon them in resistless force. The Duke of York is besieging Dunkerque, the Prince of Orange advancing on Quesnoy. General Houchard, brave soldier, but poor general, dawdles about, doing nothing, till Levasseur and Debrel, commissioners, come rushing up with orders from Carnot. Houchard vacillates, Levasseur insists, and on September 5th Houchard advances to the attack. They fight, and drive their foes to Hondschoote; but Houchard insists on falling back during the night, to Levasseur's unutterable wrath.

Catching up a map, he cries, pointing to Dunkerque : " We should be close to it, if we had not fallen back this night." On the 8th, fighting again, the young troops exposed to murderous fire, crying to be allowed to charge, Houchard nowhere to be seen. Jourdan falling wounded, and carried to the ambulance, sees Houchard consulting other officers behind a hedge, and cries out : " What a leader ! We are lost ! " " The word is not French," cries Levasseur. " Don't calculate, but say what to do." " Stop firing, and sound the charge," cries the wounded man. Levasseur is in the front, the order is given. " Forward, forward," shouts Levasseur, and as his horse falls, shot through the flank, he seizes another, and charges on ahead, and with an outburst of the *Marseillaise* and a thunder of drums, the soldiers of the Republic sweep towards the entrenchments like a torrent, and drive the allied armies from the field. In result, the Duke of York flies from his siege, leaving his baggages and fifty-two cannon behind him. Levasseur presses Houchard to advance, but Houchard still delays. Small wonder that soon after he is dismissed from his command ; for we read in the *New Annual Register for the Year 1793* : " It is in general well understood that if General Houchard had done his duty, he might have effectually cut off the retreat of the Duke of York, and probably have captured the whole of the allied army." He was guillotined at Paris on November 16th of the same year.

And now, in these latter days of September, the Prince of Coburg is besieging Mauberge; if Mauberge falls, he will winter there, ready to march on Paris in the spring. He arrived there on September 28th, and is now blockading the place. Who shall save the key of the position? Jourdan, wounded at Hondschoote, who gave such good counsel to Levasseur, shall be trusted with the perilous task. Small fear had the Prince of Coburg of his foes. "These French are proud Republicans," he says gaily, "but if they unlodge me from this, I will turn Republican myself." The French troops, indeed, are not imposing from the review standpoint; many march barefoot; most are without uniform; but they sing as they go, full of faith in Jourdan their general, and in their own brave hearts. Is not this German on their soil? Shall the well-equipped Austrian imperialists be leadscoff at the ragged Republicans? Coburg is bombarding Mauberge on the night of October 14th, but suddenly there is a pause, and the inhabitants hear the roll of distant artillery. On the 15th the thunder is still rolling; surely some battle must be waging in the south? Battle? aye, battle, indeed! Jourdan is there, and with him Carnot himself. At 9 o'clock on the morning of October 15th the battle begins; the left wing of the Republican army charges onward, carrying all before it; the right sweeps forward emulously; Jourdan leads the centre, and here a fearful combat rages; a little

drummer, aged but 15, slips behind the Austrian lines and beats the charge; he is surrounded, cut to pieces: a volunteer has his right arm shattered, the surgeons amputate it, he cries "Vive la République," and, grasping musket left-handed, is back in the fray; night falls on fifteen hundred Frenchmen lying dead, and on both armies in their positions. With the morning comes renewal of the struggle; cries of "Forward! Forward!" ring through the troops of the Republic; the strains of the *Marseillaise* rise above the thunder of the cannon; backwards and forwards rages the struggle; eight times is the village of Wattignies taken and lost; again night falls; Mauberge is relieved; the Prince of Coburg is in full retreat; the battle of Wattignies is won; the Austrians are thrown back across the Sambre. ¹

Meanwhile, Toulon is still held by the English, surrendered to them by French Royalist traitors. But there is also Augustin Robespierre (Robespierre jeune) with a friend of his, a young captain of artillery, aged but twenty-four, that Napoleon Buonaparte, whom we erewhile caught glimpse of. On the 18th November, Doppet, come to command the army, finds the young officer wrapped in his cloak, lying near his batteries, not leaving them even in slumber. Doppet, however, does not feel competent for his post, and gives way to Dugommier, a brave and able general, with whom young

¹ Drawn chiefly from Louis Blanc, chap. ix of vol. x.

Buonaparte finds work may be done. On the 25th November a counsel of war is held, and a plan submitted by Buonaparte adopted; there are two promontories, of Balagnier and Eguillette, which command the roads where lie the English ships and the interior of the English lines; true, the promontories are fortified, but they may be carried, and the young artillery officer is prepared to try; if he gets there Dugommier shall attack from the front; if he does not—but *he will*. And he does. All preparations are made, carefully and silently, the young officer working hard at his masked batteries all day, sleeping in them at night, till in the early morning of December 16th there is a crash and roar from unexpected points against the English lines, under cover of these a swift movement against Fort l' Eguillette, which is surprised, carried, held, and that quiet dark young man, having run up the tricolour, sends greeting to the English from their own guns in altogether inconsiderate and over-emphatic fashion. For three days yet the combat rages, but it is only kept up to give Admiral Hood time to blow up the arsenal, magazines, and store-houses, and to get his ships under weigh. At seven o'clock on the morning of the 19th December the long siege is over, the invader is expelled, the troops march into the evacuated town, and Toulon is once more in the hands of the French Republic.

In Alsace Hoche, at the head of the Army of the Moselle, faced the Prussians under the Duke of

Brunswick; Pichegru led the army of the Rhine against the Austrians commanded by Wurmser, and guarded Strassburg from attack. Here was the most critical point, for all the soldiers were young, and supplies of every sort were wanting. Thither, as the point of worst peril, rushed Saint-Just and his friend Lebas, and changed the face of the scene. "Ten thousand men are barefoot in the army," runs Saint-Just's decree at Strassburg; "unshoe all the aristocrats of Strassburg to-day, and by to-morrow at ten o'clock let 10,000 pairs of shoes be on their way to headquarters." The shoes went. In a few days the Municipality received 6,879 coats, vests, and trousers; 4,767 pairs of stockings; 1,351 cloaks; 2,673 sheets; 16,921 pairs of shoes; 863 pairs of boots; 20,528 shirts; 4,524 hats; 323 pairs of gaiters; 2,900 lbs. of lint; 900 coverlets.¹ Arbitrary? Yes. But if the invader is close upon you, it is better to clothe your soldiers to drive him back than to have him pillaging your town. Saint-Just had the choice of taxing Strassburg heavily for France, or seeing it destroyed wholly by Austria. He chose the former alternative; and so strong was he, and so compelling in his passionate will, that he shed not one drop of blood at Strassburg, honey-combed with conspiracy as it was. And while he fed and clothed the army, Hoche led in the field. Hoche was but six-and-twenty, bold and prompt,

¹ *Histoire de la Révolution*, Louis Blanc, vol. xi, pp. 640, 641.

full of confidence and enthusiasm. "With bayonets and bread we can conquer Europe," he would say gaily, and his spirit well suited Saint-Just the Iron, who answered to an offer of a truce from the Austrians: "The French Republic only converses with its enemies in lead." So energetically did it carry on its side of the conversation that, the Austrians and Prussians having united, Hoche, on December 26th, drove them backwards at Rilsels, chased the Austrians across the Rhine near Mannheim (December 30th), forced the Prussians to fall back upon Mayence, raised the blockade of Landau, sent to the Convention as a Christmas gift Alace restored to France, and went into winter quarters in the German Palatinate.

When 1793 closed on the Republic its soil was free from foreign foe, save only in the south, where Spain still held its ground, soon also to be dislodged.

You who would judge this Republic in its struggle for life, and stamp it cruel and bloodthirsty; you who have only eyes for the fusillades of Lyons, and the noyades of Nantes; you who at ease and safe, measure with a mete-wand, fit only for slumbrous times, the conduct of the leaders of a revolution precipitated by Royal fraud, and by priestly vice, and maddened by invading foe and by domestic treason, judge ye these men of the Terror as ye will. But I, who know something of their difficulties, and something of their nobility, who strive to judge them by the perils that encompassed them, and by

the poverty of the means at their disposal, I dare to say : Honour to the men of the Terror, who crushed Hébert with the one hand, while with the other they hurled back the allied armies of England, Prussia, Austria, Spain, and Sardinia ; who punished those who stained the Republic, and chased from its soil the foreign foes ; who raised millions for France, but themselves lived poor ; who turned boys into heroes by the passion of their own enthusiasm ; who breathed liberty that was life into a population of serfs ; and who, giving all to the Republic, life, brains, hopes, affections, have received no thanks from the France they created, but only for their errors and for their blunders the wages of the guillotine.

LECTURE XIII

THE FALL OF DANTON

WE have seen the Montagne dividing into three parties, the Dantonistes, the Robespierristes, the Hébertistes. We have seen Louis Blanc epitomising these three parties in the words, Mercy, Justice, Terror. We have seen the Dantonistes and the Robespierristes linking hands against the Hébertistes, and crushing the party of which Hébert was the voice, Ronsin, Fouché, and Carrier the arms. Unhappily Dantonistes and Robespierristes were now to turn their weapons against each other; together, even yet they might have saved the Republic; in their conflict they gave it its death-wound. Danton desired to heal the internal sores of France by mercy and forgiveness; Robespierre judged that in struggle for life so critical, it was dangerous weakness not to apply the knife and the cautery. Danton's strength might have triumphed had he possessed something of Robespierre's tireless tenacity, and if he had won to his side the iron will and quenchless enthusiasm of Saint-Just, instead of the brilliant but often mischievous and flippant genius of Camille Desmoulins.

Danton's new departure dated from that walk of his with Camille along the Seine, in the summer of 1793 (p. 382), when he cried: "Ah! too much blood has been spilt. Come, take up your pen again; write and demand clemency. I will support you." Camille, after some months of hesitation, acceded to the appeal, and resumed the use of his brilliant reckless pen, impelled apparently into sudden action by an attack levelled against Danton at the Jacobin Club. During November and December, 1793, a process of "purging" (*épuration*) went on at this famous club, the members being in turn submitted to an interrogatory, designed to test their absolute loyalty to the Revolution. Couthon, Carlyle tells us, gave as the test of loyalty: "What hast thou done to be hanged, if counter-revolution should arrive?"¹

On the 3rd December Danton was challenged by Coupé de l'Oise, as having suggested that judicial severity was being carried too far. Hotly did Danton spring to his feet, and roll out passionate protest against his accuser.

"Have I, then," he cried, "lost the marks which characterise the man who is free? Am I no longer the same man who has been with you in every crisis? Am I not he whom you have often embraced as your brother, as he who would die by your side? Am I not he who has been overwhelmed with attacks? I was one of Marat's most intrepid

¹ *History of the French Revolution*, vol. iii, p. 214.

defenders, and I invoke in my justification the shade of the People's Friend. You would marvel if you could scan my private life, and could see that the colossal fortune, urged as a crime against me by my enemies and yours, is only the petty property which I have always possessed. I defy the malicious to prove against me any crime. All their efforts cannot shake me. I will stand forth in face of the people. You shall judge me in their presence. I will no more tear one page from my history than you from yours, which will enshrine for ever the triumphs of liberty."

From every side in answer to the familiar tones broke forth the thunderous applause, and the orator proudly claimed that a committee should be appointed to investigate the accusations made against him.

Then Robespierre was seen in the tribune, and he sharply demanded that the accusers of Danton should stand forth. As no one advanced he declared that he would give voice to the whispered calumnies, and after a rapid recital of these, he turned to his friend. "Danton!" he cried, "do you not know that the braver and the more patriotic the man, the more will the enemies of the common weal strive for his undoing? Do you not know, do not all of you, my fellow citizens, know that this plan is an infallible one? Who are the calumniators? Men who appear to be exempt from vice, and who have never displayed any virtue. Eh! if the defender of liberty

were no longer calumniated, we should know that we had no longer priests nor nobles with whom to fight. Our country's foes overwhelm me with exclusive praises. I will have none of them. Do they imagine that I do not see the dagger with which they would slay the fatherland beneath the praises scrawled on certain sheets? Since the very origin of the Revolution, I have learned to distrust hypocrisy. The cause of the patriots is one, as is the cause of the tyrants; they have all one interest. I may be mistaken about Danton, but his private life merits naught but praise. In political matters, I have watched him; a difference of opinion between us made me observe him with care, sometimes even with anger, but shall I conclude that he would betray the country because he has not always agreed with me? No! I have always found him serving the fatherland with zeal. Danton demands that he be judged; he is right; judge me as well. Let them come forth, these men who are greater patriots than we!"¹

For the moment the two, who had been comrades in so many dangers, triumphed side by side, and Camille on the following day wrote his first number of the *Vieux Cordelier*, published on December 5th. In this he penned his eager thanks to Robespierre: "Victory was ours, because amid the ruins of so many colossal reputations, that of Robespierre

¹ The whole of this scene is taken from the *Histoire de la Révolution*, Louis Blanc, vol. xi, p. 665.

remains standing . . . Strong on the ground acquired during the illness and the absence of Danton, this party [the party of foreigners] insolent tyrant of the Society, hooted him in the very midst of the most touching and convincing proofs of his justification, and in the bosom of the Assembly shook heads and smiled pityingly, as at the speech of a man universally condemned. Yet we triumphed, because of the crushing speech of Robespierre, whose genius seems only to increase with the dangers of the Republic; and with the profound impression made on every mind, none dared to raise a voice against Danton, for it would have been to admit having fingered the guineas of Pitt. Robespierre! in all the other perils from which you have rescued the Republic, you had companions in your glory. Yesterday you saved it by yourself!"

Alas! This unity was not to endure much longer. Robespierre found that he was losing his predominance in the Committee of Public Safety, and that the policy there supported by Couthon, by Saint-Just, and by himself was constantly checked and frustrated during the winter 1793-94 by the harsher Hébertiste leanings of Billaud-Varennes, Barrère, and Collot d'Herbois, strengthened outside by Ronsin and Vincent. He determined at last to check the Committee by a new body, to be styled a Committee of Justice, which should by careful examination weed out the guilty from among the suspected, and set the innocent free, and thus

gradually but surely lead the Republic out of the Reign of Terror. On December 20th this measure was voted, but the step was not enough to satisfy the ardent longing of Camille for escape from the shedding of blood; it was a Committee of Mercy he desired, and on that very day he bursts out into passionate and most pathetic plea: "O my beloved Robespierre, it is to you I appeal, for I have known the time when there remained unconquered but you alone, when without you the ship *Argo* would have perished, the Republic would have been lost! . . . O my old schoolfellow! you whose eloquent speeches will be read by posterity, remember our old lessons of history and of philosophy: that love is stronger and more durable than fear: that reverence and religion were born of gratitude: that acts of mercy are the ladder, as Tertullian says, by which members of committees of public safety may climb to heaven, but that they can never rise thitherwards by bloody steps. Already you approach this idea in the measure you have to-day had voted . . . It is true that it is a *committee of justice* which has been proposed. But since when has mercy become a crime in the Republic?"¹

Unhappily these pathetic words aroused cries of approval from the Royalists and from all who hated the Revolution, and there seems but too much truth in Robespierre's view that mercy to those who were still keeping the Republic in strife for very

¹ *Vieux Cordelier*, No. 4, pp. 78-74

existence would have meant the destruction of all that for which they had been striving during those months of agony. And, indeed, Camille, in his impetuous onslaught against the Hébertistes, soon let his facile pen carry him too far, and he was, as we have seen, himself called sharply to account at the Jacobin Club, and was expelled but promptly reinstated, thanks again to the good offices of Robespierre. It is obvious that the Hébertistes strove to fan any spark of discord between the Dantonistes and the Robespierristes into flame, and their attempt was unfortunately rendered the easier by the constitution above noted of the Committee of Public Safety. The Convention, alarmed lest any relaxation of the Terror should give to her enemies safe ground for conspiracy within the Republic, repeated on December 26th the vote it had passed on the 20th for the establishment of Robespierre's Committee of Justice, and Camille's attempt to abolish martial law ere the state of siege was over not only failed to succeed, but it recoiled on himself and on his friends, while by the defeat it brought on Robespierre it strengthened his harsher opponents on the Committee of Public Safety, and weakened his power of protection.

We traced last week the final struggle and crushing out of the Hébertistes; the explosion of the quarrel between the Dantonistes and Robespierristes was not long delayed. The side taken by the people in the struggle is easily understood;

they loved Danton better, but they felt that Robespierre was necessary to the State. Danton was too much away, seeking refuge from the struggle of which he was weary, in his wife's love, in the peace of his home: Robespierre was ever at his post, always in sight, devoting himself day and night to the public service. We find Danton at Sèvres, with his friends Philippeaux, Camille, Westermann, Fabre d'Eglantine, idle, hesitating, appearing only at irregular intervals in Paris, while his influence was fading away, and he himself was becoming not only unnecessary but useless to France, in that life and death struggle in which we have seen her locked.

On January 13th, 1794, Fabre d'Eglantine was arrested on a charge of being implicated in some disreputable monetary transactions, a charge which appears to have been totally unfounded, and which was probably due to Hébertiste intrigue, but which none the less, in the eyes of the careless, cast a slur on the fair fame of Danton his friend. So strongly does Danton appear to have felt this, that he actually in the Convention urged the liberation of Ronsin and Vincent, arrested, as we have seen, on the accusation of Fabre d'Eglantine.

Through the rest of this month and on through the next, we find the struggle between "Mercy" and "Justice" continually breaking out, in the Convention, in the Jacobin Club, in the press; and Robespierre while keeping the Hébertiste "Terror" at bay—for it must not be forgotten that we are

dealing with a time before the 24th March, 1794—is constantly blaming those who, by attacking the Revolutionary Tribunal, were lending aid to the foreign attacks on the Republic as being cruel and bloodthirsty. We find him on February 5th speaking in the Convention, and after attacking the Hébertistes, he cries : “ The government of a revolution is the despotism of liberty against tyranny. Shall force be made only to protect crime ? Shall it not also strike those haughty heads which the lightning has doomed ? Nature has imposed on every being the law of self-preservation. Crime massacres innocence to reign, and innocence struggles with all its force in the hands of crime. Let tyranny reign but one single day, and on the morrow not a solitary patriot will remain. How long shall the fury of despots be called justice, and the justice of the people barbarity or rebellion ? How tender are men to the oppressors, how inexorable to the oppressed ! But yet nothing is more natural. He who does not hate vice cannot love virtue. But one or the other must succumb. Pardon for the Royalists, cry some ; mercy for the scoundrels ! No ! Mercy for the innocent, mercy for the weak, mercy for the unhappy, mercy for humanity.” ¹

It seems probable that vigorous outburst was caused by the discovery of the attacks penned by Camille Desmoulins in the seventh number of the

¹ Taken partly from Lewes' *Life of Robespierre*, p. 323, and partly from Louis Blanc, p. 695.

Vieux Cordelier, the number which should have been issued on February 3rd, 1794, but which never appeared. This unhappy number not only attacked Collot d'Herbois and Barrère, but also the Committee of Public Safety and Robespierre. Remember that the Committee was necessary to the Republic, that Carnot in it was planning the strategy of Hoche and of Pichegru, that Saint-Just in it was throwing into the defence of France all his energy of will and brain, and you will understand better the inopportuneness of such attack at such moment. Much that Camille said was nobly conceived and nobly uttered; but with the tide of invasion just rolled back, with La Vendée still panting, with Spain still on French soil, with Royalism conspiring and foreigner menacing, it was not then the time to assail the only body that stood between the Republic and destruction, and to place in the hand of every slanderer of France fresh weapon of attack. After Camille's death this famous No. VII was published, and all may now read it and judge for themselves whether, with the enemy scarce chased off the fatherland, such an attack on those who had planned, who had toiled, who had striven, was fit work for patriot pen.

Robespierre's stern, and yet pathetic, defence was echoed in sharper accents by Saint-Just—fresh from Strassburg, from Alsace—on February 28th. He stands in the tribune once more, pale with his vigils and his toils, palpitating with his passion and his enthusiasm: "What? the Court hung men in

the prisons ; in the Seine floated the victims whom it had drowned ; there were fifteen thousand prisoners ; three thousand men were broken on the wheel ; there were then more prisoners in Paris than there are to-day. In times of famine soldiers marched against the people. Survey Europe ! In Europe there are four millions of prisoners whose cries you do not hear, while your parricidal moderation leaves the enemies of your Government to triumph. Fools that we are ! We take a metaphysical delight in displaying our principles ; the kings, a thousand times more cruel than we, sleep amid their crimes. Citizens, by what illusion do they persuade you that you are inhuman ? Your Revolutionary Tribunal in a year has destroyed three hundred criminals ; did not the Inquisition of Spain do far more than this ? And for what reason ? Have the law-courts of England slain none this year ? And what of Bender, who roasted the infants of the Belgians ? And what of the dungeons of Germany, where the people are buried ? Of these they say naught ! Do they talk about *mercy* in the courts of the European monarchs ? No ! Do not let yourselves be softened . . . Those only who aid in freeing it have any rights in this our fatherland. Those who make revolutions by half, are only busied in digging a grave ! ”¹

We have seen that the return of Saint-Just was followed by the final effort and the destruction

¹ *Histoire de la Révolution*, Louis Blanc, vol. xi, p. 695.

of the Hébertistes. Unfortunately another destruction was approaching, and a warning note was sounded by the arrest of Héault de Séchelles, Danton's friend, in whose rooms on March 15th was discovered a man named Catus, who was one of the proscribed. Héault de Séchelles was thrown into the Luxembourg prison, and Danton's friends, anxious for his safety, implored him to take some steps in self-defence. Danton met their appeals with his half careless, half scornful indifference. "I would rather be guillotined than guillotine," he said. "Besides my life is not so very valuable, and I am weary of man."—"But the members of the committee seek your death."—"Well, well," the hot temper breaking out, "if ever—if Billaud—if Robespierre—but they would be denounced as tyrants. The house of Robespierre would be levelled with the ground, and its site would be sown with salt; a gallows would be raised there, execrated, the avenger of crime. Yet," and the strong voice softened, "my friends will say of me that I was a good father, a good friend, a good citizen; they will not forget me".—"But you may avoid"—"I say again, I would rather be guillotined than guillotine".—"Then you must leave the country!"—"Leave the country!" curling his lip upward in wrath and proud disdain, "can one carry away the fatherland on one's shoel-eather"?¹

¹ *Révolution française*, Mignet, vol. ii, p. 47.

Of the now rare appearances of his in the Convention some stray notes have reached us, and we can but eagerly glean any fragments that tell us anything that Danton thought in these last few weeks. On March 18th he speaks in answer to an orator who demanded permission to sing the praises of the Convention at the bar of that Assembly, to the accompaniment of an organ! "The hall and the bar of the Convention," Danton says gravely, "are intended for the solemn and serious utterance of the will of the citizens; no one can be allowed to change them into a mountebank's platform. I have in my character a good deal of the gaiety of the Frenchman, and I hope to preserve it. I think, for instance, we ought to give our enemies a ball; but here we should rigidly, and with dignity and composure, occupy ourselves with the greater interests of the country, discuss them, sound 'the charge' upon all tyrants, point out and strike down all traitors, and beat to arms against all impostors. I do full justice to the civic loyalty of the petitioners, but I demand that henceforth nothing shall be heard at the bar of the Convention but *reason in prose*."¹ Can you not imagine the smile in the eyes of Danton as he utters this quaint, and most necessary appeal? He spoke for the last time on March 19th, on the accusation against Bouchotte.

On the Committee of Public Safety, early in this March of 1794, Billaud-Varennes—as we learn from

¹ *Camille Desmoulins and His Wife*, Jules Clarétie, p. 320.

his own speech on July 27th (Thermidor 9)—ventures to propose that Danton should be arrested; it was brought as matter of accusation later against Robespierre that when this suggestion was made "he leapt to his feet like a madman, crying: 'Would you destroy then the best of our patriots?'"¹ Little doubt can there be that Robespierre was forced into the attack on Danton, and that chiefly perhaps by Saint-Just, his closest friend, who deemed that Danton and Camille, with those inopportune cries of theirs for mercy, were endangering the Republic he adored. His words, spoken in his attack on Danton in the Convention, have come down to us, burning as fire, keen as steel: "There is something terrible in the sacred love of our country. It is so exclusive, that it sacrifices all to the public interest, without pity, without fear, without respect of persons. It precipitates Manlius, it slays private love, it drags Regulus to Carthage."²

Still an attempt was made to bridge the gulf which was opening between two men who, united, might have saved the Republic, and who for five years had worked side by side for France. There is a sad and bitter interest in the last meeting, reported by Lamartine, who tells us that Danton and Robespierre dined together at the house of a mutual friend, and that at first all promised well. The commencement of the repast was cordial; Danton

¹ *Histoire de la Révolution*, Louis Blanc, vol. xi, p. 708.

² *Ibid.*, p. 709.

was frank, Robespierre was calm. But when, later, these two chiefs of the Revolution began to discuss the state of public affairs, discord followed swiftly on difference. Listen, as the twain, face to face as equals for the last time, drift into bitterest antagonism. "'We hold, between us two, the peace or war of the Republic,' said Danton; 'misfortune to him who would declare it! I am for peace; I desire concord; but I would not give my head to thirty tyrants!' 'Whom do you call tyrants?' said Robespierre. 'There is no other tyranny under the Republic than that of country.' 'Country!' exclaimed Danton; 'is that in a meeting of dictators, some of whom are thirsting for my blood, which the others have not the power to refuse?' 'You deceive yourself,' replied Robespierre: 'the committee thirsts only after justice, and only watches over bad citizens. But are those good citizens who desire to disarm the Republic in the midst of the combat, and who boast of the grace of indulgence, when we accept for them the odium and responsibility of rigour?' 'Is that an allusion?' said Danton. 'No! it is an accusation!' said Robespierre. 'Your friends desire my death. Your party desires the death of the republic.' Parties interposed between them. They brought them back to moderation, almost to good-will. 'Not only,' said Robespierre, 'does the Committee of Public Safety not desire your head, but they desire ardently to strengthen the Government with the highest

ascendency of La Montagne. Would I be here if I desired your head? Would I offer my hand to him whose assassination I meditated? Calumny is sown between us, Danton; be cautious of it! By taking one's friends for one's enemies, we oblige them sometimes to become such. Let us see; cannot we understand each other? Is it necessary that power should be terrible, or not, when danger is extreme?' 'Yes,' said Danton; 'but it ought not to be implacable. The anger of the people is a movement. Your scaffolds are a system. The revolutionary tribunal that I invented was a rampart, a bulwark—you make it a slaughter-house. You strike without discrimination.' 'September made no selection,' said Robespierre, sneeringly. 'September,' resumed Danton, 'was a thoughtless instinct, an anonymous crime, which no one can acquit, but which no one can punish in the people. The Committee of Public Safety sheds blood drop by drop, as if to amuse themselves with the horror and custom of executions.' 'There are men,' replied Robespierre, 'who like better to shed it wholesale. You caused as many innocent as guilty to die. Has a single man died without trial? Has a single head been struck which was not proscribed by law?' Danton, at these words, allowed a burst of bitter and provoking laughter to escape his lips. 'Innocents! innocents!' exclaimed he, 'before this committee, which has bid the cannon-ball to choose at Lyons, the Loire, and at Nantes! You jest, Robespierre; you take

the hatred people bear towards you for crime; you declare all your enemies guilty.' 'No!' said Robespierre; 'and the proof is that you live.'"¹

From that fatal meeting Robespierre went to Saint-Just; the die was cast.

On the 30th March, Danton, who has met all urgency of appeal and warning with his negligent: "They dare not," is suddenly aroused by the hasty entrance of Paris, who has come swiftly rushing on a mission of alarm; there has been that night a meeting of the three Committees—of Public Safety, of General Safety, and of Legislation—and he, listening at the door, had heard Danton's name repeatedly uttered. Danton must fly; now, this very hour, this very minute; he would conceal him, were his own life to be the forfeit. Danton's sweet young wife flings herself at his feet, weeping, praying him to flee. But the great, if latterly slothful, strength of this man will not yield, and scorns to fly. "They dare not," he repeats, and will do nothing, save go to bed as usual, and peacefully to sleep. At six in the morning of March 31st, there are gens d'armes thundering at his door. They hand to him the order for his arrest. This is signed by no less than eighteen members of the Committees, the names of Billaud-Varenne, Vadier, Carnot stand first; Saint-Just is eighth, Robespierre last but one. "They dare then?" Danton says firmly, with that

¹ *History of the Girondists*, vol. iii, pp. 359, 360.

characteristic twist of the lip, which ever told his anger and his scorn. "They dare? they are bolder than I thought." He dresses quietly, clasps his wife in his arms, and goes.

Camille Desmoulins had been arrested during the previous night, torn from the embrace of Lucile, the wife he adored, and thrown into the Luxembourg prison. Thither, too, on that same fatal night, had been carried Lacroix and Philippeaux. These Danton finds awaiting him when he reaches his last home in life. Small avail that on the following day in the Convention Legendre shall make gallant attempt to save his friend; small avail that crowds, murmuring, menacing, shall pour into Convention galleries, and hang round the prison walls sullen, uneasy. There is no one to lead, no one to guide, and Robespierre has spoken against Danton, and is not Robespierre the very sheet-anchor of the Republic? The decree for their trial is passed, a decree that would be absurd had its results not been so sad: "The National Convention, after having heard the Report of the Committees of General and Public Safety, condemns to trial Camille Desmoulins, Hérault, Danton, Philippeaux, and Lacroix, charged with complicity with D'Orléans and Dumouriez, with Fabre D'Eglantine and the enemies of the Republic, and with having joined in the conspiracy aiming at the re-establishment of monarchy, and the destruction of the national representation and the Republican government. In

consequence, it orders their committal to judgment with Fabre d'Eglantine."¹

Danton accused of Royalist conspiracy ! Danton, who, when the allied kings of Europe first rolled their invading armies Francewards, sent his voice of thunder echoing against the crowding foes, and proclaimed that France Republican defied the monarchs who assailed her, and that "her gage of battle was the head of a king" !

Riouffe, who has left so many interesting notes on the prisoners of the Revolution, has preserved many phrases that fell from Danton's lips during the 31st March and the 1st April. "I did not create the Revolutionary Tribunal that it might be the scourge of humanity ; I made it to prevent another massacre of September . . . I leave all in a frightful muddle ; there is not a man among them who knows how to rule . . . Amid so much madness, I am not sorry that my name is attached to some decrees which will prove that I did not share it . . . It were better to be a poor fisherman than to govern men." Such broken utterances have come down to us to hint at Danton's thoughts during his brief prison stay.

One notable interview takes place there. In the outburst of suspicion against foreigners in January, 1794, Thomas Paine had been arrested and thrown into the Luxembourg. He had remained there ever since, and now Danton meets him. "What you did

¹ *History of the Girondists*, vol. iii, p. 373.

for the happiness and the liberty of your country," he says gravely, "I have vainly tried to do for mine. I have been less fortunate." And then, smiling: "I am to be sent to the scaffold. Well, I shall go merrily."¹

In the night of the 1—2 April, Danton, Camille, Lacroix, and Westermann are removed from the Luxembourg to the Conciergerie. They dare not take them through the streets in the daylight, lest rescue should be attempted, and lest the voice of Danton, rolling over the people, should make them forget everything save that the man they had loved and followed was on his way to trial and to the guillotine.

Only two days, indeed, may Danton lie in prison; those who have plunged him therein are in peril till his death shall free them from the fear of his triumph. On April 2nd, 1794, he stands at the bar of the Revolutionary Tribunal, with Camille and Hérault, with Westermann and Fabre d'Eglantine, with Lacroix and Philippeaux. With these were massed together others of different type, Chabot, Bazire, Delaunay, Julien, the two brothers Frey, and D'Espagnac, Luillier (who was acquitted), Gazman, a Spaniard, and Deiderideen, a Dane.

The usual formal questions as to name, age, dwelling, are put to the accused. "I am Camille Desmoulins," says that pamphleteer lightly. "I am

¹ *Camille Desmoulins and His Wife*, Jules Clarétie, pp. 320, 321.

thirty-three, the age of the good Sans-culotte Jesus ; a fatal age for the Revolutionist." Westermann, the general, makes disdainful answer : " I demand to be shown naked to the people. I have received seven wounds, all in the front. One only have I received in the back—it is your indictment." And you, who are you ? " I am Danton, a name not unknown in the Revolution," comes in proud and stern reply. " My dwelling will soon be Nothingness : my place in the Pantheon of History."

Facing his judges, we see Danton once more at his mightiest ; as his passion rises against the scandalous accusations brought to destroy him, his voice rolls across the Seine, and the listening crowds outside throb and sway with its rise and fall. Hark ! how he denounces, how he defies, how he pleads ; you can feel the rush of his indignation ; you can see the toss of the lion's head, the curl of the mobile lips : " My voice, which has so often made itself heard for the people's cause, will have but small difficulty in repelling calumny. Will the cowards who slander me dare to attack me to my face ? Let them come forth ! I will cover them with shame . . . My head is here. It will answer for all . . . I am weary of my life ; I am impatient to be rid of it." Hermann interrupts, rebukingly : " Danton ! arrogance belongs to crime ; calm is the fit garb of innocence." But he : " Personal arrogance is doubtless blameworthy, and of this none can accuse me ; but the patriotic arrogance

with which I have so often served the commonwealth is necessary in revolutionary times ; that is permitted to me, and of that I boast. Is a revolutionist such as I am to be expected to offer a cold defence ? Men of my stamp are priceless ; on their brows is stamped in ineffaceable characters the seal of Liberty, the genius of Republicanism ! . . . In glancing through this odious sheet [of accusation] I feel my whole being shudder." He is again interrupted : " Marat was accused as you are. He felt the necessity of justifying himself, fulfilled his duty as a good citizen, established his innocence in respectful fashion, and was but the more beloved of the people. I cannot commend to you a better model." " I am to condescend to justify myself ? I, sold to Mirabeau, to D'Orléans, to Dumouriez ? I, the partisan of Royalists ? Let my accusers show themselves, and I will replunge them into nothingness. Vile impostors, come forth ! " For the third time Hermann checks him, and tells him that such sallies will not avail to prove his innocence. " An accused such as I," he answers haughtily, " understands words and things ; he may answer before a jury, but he does not address it." ¹ And so the struggle goes on ; one after another he seizes the accusations against him, rends them in pieces, tramples them under foot, diverging into furious attack on those who had dared to challenge his devotion to Liberty. In vain Judge Hermann tries

¹ Taken from the extracts given by Louis Blanc, pp. 716, 717.

to check the torrent of passionate declamation ; in vain he rebukes the accused who has become accuser ; in vain he tinkles his bell to impose silence : " A man pleading for his honour and his life," rings out the mighty voice, " may well overbear the tinkling of thy bell."

For a time, exhausted, he stands aside, and the other prisoners are interrogated ; they demand that sixteen members of the Convention shall be summoned as witnesses ; the tribunal is uneasy ; the galleries are threatening ; the sitting is raised and the prisoners are led back to their cells.

On the morrow (April 3rd) a similar scene ; the witnesses are refused, and Danton threatens to appeal to the people against such wrong ; a growl of approval answers him from the crowd. Fouquier, alarmed, declares that he must consult the Convention, and that he will forthwith write for instructions, and after Westermann and Philippeaux have been interrogated, the sitting is raised. The third day of the trial begins (April 4th), and the excitement is more terrible than ever ; the prisoners insist on their witnesses, and Fouquier writes to the Convention asking for definite instructions. Meanwhile a plot has been manufactured outside by a man named Laflotte, according to which the Luxembourg prison was to be attacked and the Dantonistes delivered, and this gives pretext for crushing the accused ; a decree of the Convention is swiftly passed, declaring that any prisoner who insults the

national justice shall be silenced at once, and orders that the conspiracy of the Luxembourg shall be investigated. The decree is read in Court, with the denunciation of Laflotte, and the latter is answered by a cry from Camille, as his wife's name is mentioned among those of the conspirators: "The scoundrels! not content with assassinating me, they will assassinate my wife as well." A scene of terrible confusion follows. Danton appeals to all present to say whether he has insulted justice, and the sitting is hastily raised to prevent a riot. The fourth day opens, and the judge puts the fatal question to the jury: "Are you sufficiently informed?" As Louis Blanc points out, nothing had really been done; no witnesses produced; no proofs brought forward; it was impossible that the jury should decide fairly where no evidence had been laid before them. From the prisoners breaks a cry of wrath, of indignant protest: "We are judged without being heard." Camille passionately tears in pieces the sheets on which he had written his defence, and flings them in Fouquier-Tinville's face. There is an ominous sway in the crowd. What shall be done to put an end to this? The decree! Let the decree be used. They are insulting justice. Out with them from the Court. The gens d'armes drag Camille out by main force. Danton walks forth contemptuously, too proud to struggle vainly, and the jury retire to deliberate.

Lamartine has told us how the verdict of the jury was based on reasons of State, not on justice. A

brief dialogue admits us to the secret of the crime they wrought that day. "One of the colleagues of Souberbielle, Topino-Lebrun, approached him. 'Well, Souberbielle,' said Lebrun to him, 'what do you do here?' 'I am pondering upon the terrible act which they desire to obtain from us,' answered Souberbielle. 'And I have reflected,' returned the jurymen. 'What have you decided upon?' asked Souberbielle. 'I have said,' replied the jurymen, 'this is not a trial, it is a measure. Circumstances have brought us to that pitch when justice vanishes to allow policy to reign. We are no longer jurymen, we are statesmen.' 'But,' said Souberbielle, 'are there two modes of justice? One for the low and another for the high? And does innocence in the vulgar become crime in the higher classes?' 'Bah,' said the jurymen; 'these subtleties are not the consideration, but good sense and patriotism. We are where we are. The Republic is in one of those extremities where judgment is not a justice but a choice. Danton and Robespierre can no longer agree. To save the country one of them must perish. Well, then, ask yourself, as a good patriot, and answer yourself conscientiously,—which of the two do you believe to be at this moment the more indispensable to the Republic, Robespierre or Danton?' 'Robespierre,' answered Souberbielle, without hesitation. 'Well, then, you have judged,' returned Topino-Lebrun, and withdrew."¹

¹ *History of the Girondists*, vol. iii, p. 387.

They return to the court and give in their verdict of "Guilty". Sentence is to be pronounced, and the accused have by law the right to hear their sentence in open court; but those who are determined to slay them dare not bring them back; the risk is too great, the crowd is too menacing. An officer is charged to carry the death-sentence to them in their prison, but they will not listen to him. "It is an assassination," says Danton, and turns haughtily away. Camille, poor Camille, cries: "My wife! my child!" and sobs bitterly as he realises that sweet Lucile's lips will never again press his.

Two tumbrils are in waiting, and the second carries Danton, haughty, disdainful, steady, Camille still weeping for Lucile, and Fabre d'Eglantine. As Camille appeals to the people not to let him die, "My only crime," he cries, "has been pity!" Danton breaks in short and stern: "Be quiet, Camille, and let the rabble be." To Fabre d'Eglantine, who is lamenting that he leaves unfinished a comedy in verse, he says with grim, sardonic humour: "*Vos vers! Bah! Dans une semaine vous ferez assez de vers.*"¹ As they pass Robespierre's house they see every shutter closed, as though he would fain have sent a voiceless message to them of his pain and grief.

They are at the foot of the scaffold. Hérault de Séchelles leans forward to kiss his friend for the

¹ The pun, which has well been called "a horrible calembour," is untranslatable.

last time, and as the executioner interferes Danton says reproachfully: "Are you ordered to be more cruel than death itself? You cannot prevent our heads kissing each other in your basket." Camille, who had recovered his courage, dies quietly with a lock of Lucoile's hair clasped between his fingers. All are now dead save Danton, and his turn is come. As he rises to meet his doom the remembrance of his wife, his darling, sweeps over him and the strong man bows like a reed: "O my wife, my well-beloved, I shall never see thee more!" And then, checking himself, "Come, Danton, no weakness," he draws himself up erect, and mounts the ladder of the guillotine. "Show my head to the people," he says disdainfully to the executioner; "it is worth while." In another moment the Titan of the Revolution lives only "in the Pantheon of History".

LECTURE XIV

GLORY AND GRIEF

THE murder of Danton seems to have dizzied his murderers; the Committee of Public Safety, dominated now completely by Collot d'Herbois, Barrère, and Billaud-Varenne, has escaped wholly from the guiding hand of Robespierre; Saint-Just, allying himself with Danton's foes to crush Danton, has made them supreme, and has signed unconsciously his own death-warrant and that of his friends.

We can hurry swiftly over the sad months of April and May, 1794, in Paris. On the 10th took place the trial of General Dillon, of Chaumette, of Madame Hébert, of poor Lucile, Camille's widow, of Gobel, and of twenty-one others. Gobel and Chaumette were accused of Atheism, the others of taking part in a conspiracy at the Luxembourg for the delivery of Danton, Camille, and other prisoners. Whether the conspiracy was a real one is doubtful; if it were, few could blame a wife for conspiring to save her husband. Jules Clarétie writes: "Lucile was guilty only of despair and love; she had never

conspired, she had but hovered around the prison like a bird over its nest. She had called on Camille's name, she had made mournful signs which were intended to convey all her feelings in one look, in one gesture."¹ On her trial she seemed only eager for the sentence which would re-unite her to Camille in the grave; life was valueless to her, since he that she loved was dead. The trial lasted for three days, nineteen were condemned, seven were acquitted, and on April 13th (Germinal 24), the tumbrils rolled through Paris carrying a group of condemned, among whom was Lucile. Quoting again from her biographer: "'I am sorry,' she said (to General Dillon), 'to have caused your death.' Dillon smiled, and replied that the accusation against him was only a pretext, and was beginning to compassionate her in his turn when Lucile interrupted him. 'Look,' she said, 'at my face; is it that of a woman who needs consolation?' In truth she looked radiant . . . 'They have assassinated the best of men,' she again said; 'if I did not hate them for that, I should bless them for the service they have done me this day.' Among all the heroic women who have died upon the scaffold, the youthful smiling face of Lucile stands out prominently, illuminated with a joyous light. It is the wife dying for the husband, a victim of passionate love of the noblest, holiest kind . . . She mounted the steps of the scaffold with a sort of happy pride. They were for

¹ *Camille Desmoulins and His Wife*, p. 360.

her the steps of an altar. She was going to Camille ! This thought made her smile. The executioner looked at her, moved in spite of himself. She was, he has told us, scarcely pale. This young woman, who looked like a picture by Greuze, died like a Roman matron. The fair childlike head retained its expression of profound joy and passionate ecstasy, even when flung bleeding into the blood-stained sawdust of the dreadful basket, by the brutal hands of Sanson's assistant. " ¹

Alas for a Republic that needed to slay a wife because she loved !

On the 22nd April, Malesherbes is executed, for being privy to " plots which have existed since 1789, against the liberty, the safety, the sovereignty of the people ". Such was the vague indictment that tossed into the basket of the guillotine the white hairs of the rebuker of the vices of Louis XV, the protector of Rousseau, the man whose strong aid alone made the publication of the *Encyclopædia* possible. ² On the same day perished D'Epréménil, Le Chapelier, and Thoret. On May 8, Lavoisier, the great chemist, one of the glories of France, was slain. Vain all his vast services to the world, his genius, the value of his life to humanity ; in his prison-cell a deputation from the Lycée des Arts visited him and placed on his head a wreath of honour ; but he had once been a farmer-general,

¹ *Camille Desmoulins and His Wife*, pp. 363-365.

² *Histoire de la Révolution*, Louis Blanc, vol. ii, p. 785.

and was therefore included in a general indictment levelled against them; he perished, innocent, whelmed under the wrath evoked by the crimes of those whose office he had shared. On the 11th May Madame Elizabeth, the sister of Louis XVI, was led to the guillotine; there is no doubt that the accusations against her of conspiracy against the Republic, of correspondence with foreign princes, and so on, were true, but why not have exiled her and left her life untouched? Outside France she would have been harmless, and the Republic would not have been stained with another woman's blood. Robespierre strove hard to save her, but in vain; she died for the sins of her family, as so many innocent ones had aforetime died by their hands, suffering, guiltless, for their guilt. The Dauphin and his sister were now left alone: father, mother, aunt had perished. The poor boy, sickly, and unused to plain living, gradually faded away and died 8th June, 1795; his sister was set free on 19th December, 1795, and later became the Duchesse d'Angoulême.

On the very day of the execution of Lavoisier, Robespierre delivered a remarkable oration in the Assembly, led away by his passionate Theism and by his desire to see religion maintained, purified from the superstitions of Roman Catholicism. Parts of this speech are conceived in the noblest style: "Europe is on its knees before the shadows of the tyrants whom we punish; it thinks life

impossible without kings and nobles ; we think it impossible with them . . . Our sublime neighbours gravely entertain the universe with the health of the king, with his amusements and his travels, they are determined that posterity shall know at what time he dined, at what moment he returned from the chase ; what happy soil, at each hour of the day, had the honour of being trodden under his august feet. We will tell it the names and the virtues of the heroes who died for liberty." Robespierre then entered into an enthusiastic defence of Theism, affirming that "the idea of the Supreme Being and of the immortality of the soul is a conditional appeal to Justice, it is then both Social and Republican". He next made an impassioned onslaught against the iniquities committed by kings and priests, leagued against peoples, and concluded by urging that education should be spread through all France and that national festivals should be established by law.

Carried away by his eloquence the Convention ruled by acclamation the following decree :

"The French people recognises the existence of the Supreme Being and the immortality of the soul.

"It recognises the performance of duty as the worship worthy of the Supreme.

"Festivals shall be established to recall men to the thought of God and of the dignity of humanity.

"These shall take their names from the glorious events of our Revolution, from the virtues which are

the most precious and the most useful to man, and from the chief gifts of Nature.

"On Prairial 2 a festival shall be celebrated in honour of the Supreme Being."¹

All the world has read of that famous Fête de l'Etre Suprême, held ultimately on the 8th June (Prairial 20), at which Robespierre set fire to combustible images, representing Atheism and Anarchy, amid the approving plaudits of the Convention and the crowd. A wild scene of enthusiasm was seen that day in the garden of the Tuileries, flowers everywhere, rejoicing everywhere (on the surface at least), a veritable birth of a New Era of peace, of brotherhood, of love. For that day the knife of the guillotine hung idle; "Why," cried Robespierre, "why must there be one scaffold left in France?"

Alas! the scaffolds are beginning to grow more crowded than ever, and but two days later, on June 10th, is passed, on Couthon's motion, that terrible "law of Prairial 22," which divides the Revolutionary Tribunal into sections, that it may work the more swiftly and so plots may be met; which enlarges the Law of the Suspect; which dispenses with witnesses if "material or moral proofs exist" without them; which deprives the accused of legal assistance in their defence, and which places the power of arresting members of the Convention itself in the hands of the

¹ *Histoire de la Révolution*, pp. 378, 379.

Committee of Public Safety. Under this law "batches" of prisoners are condemned, forty, fifty, sixty at a time; sixty is the limit. Each night the roll-call of those to be tried on the morrow is read, and those whose names are in it pass to the Conciergerie, to trial thence, and on to the guillotine. Mere blind fury of suspicion, of rage, of murder. Robespierre is sick of it; he had deserted the Committee before the Commission of the Prisons was formed which sent the roll-call of death. "It matters little," said the editors of the *Histoire Parlementaire*, "that Robespierre did not participate at all in this; it matters little that neither he nor his friends knew of these lists; that the public accuser, Fouquier Tinville, declared at his trial that Robespierre was always a stranger to these accusations, and that he had never seen his signature; Robespierre still stands before posterity, accused of having, by his decree, given the signal of these executions *en masse*." Through June and July he does not go near the Committee, he seldom attends the Convention, he is often at the Jacobins, seeming to find some refuge there from this torrent he cannot stem, which has swallowed the Girondins, which has swallowed Danton, which he feels will soon swallow him.

His absences are used against him; his foes on the Committee whisper "tyrant," when the people cheer him, and sneers were heard on the Fête de

¹ Quoted by G. H. Lewes, in his *Life of Robespierre*, p. 357.

l'Etre Suprême : " It is but a step from the Capitol to the Tarpeian Rock." " There are Brutuses yet." There is small doubt that Robespierre had resolved to end the Terror, and that he had put Couthon forward to propose the law of Prairial 22 in order that by means of it he might strike down its leaders, Collot d'Herbois, Fouché, Barère, Billaud-Yvarenne, Vadier, Amar, Tallien, Bourdon. But he lacked the energy to strike at the critical moment, and his new weapon was snatched and used by the very hands he had desired to paralyse. Ah ! if Danton's strength had now been allied to Robespierre's clearheadedness. But Danton was waiting for Robespierre in the tomb.

The leaders of the Committee of Public Safety felt their danger ; they knew that the final triumph of Robespierre would be the signal for their own destruction ; they had urged on Robespierre and Danton, reluctant, the sacrifice of the Girondins ; they had sacrificed to them the Hébertiste party, feeling they were not strong enough to protect their friends against these two united, and that if they upheld they would perish with them ; they had forced Robespierre to yield up Danton and Camille, when these tried to check the Terror, and so in reality to weaken his own policy while he strengthened theirs ; now that Robespierre only remained between themselves and supreme power, and that he was resolute to try and check the bloodshed, they determined that he too should fall.

But how? for Robespierre was loved by many, and around him ever was a body of the Jacobins who guarded him wherever he went. They commenced by trying to make him ridiculous. An old mad woman, Catherine Théot, had declared that she was the mother of God, and that Robespierre was the Logos, the prophet. The folly was seized upon and turned into a pretended plot, and the ridicule poured on Catherine Théos, as she was mockingly called, was easily made to bespatter her alleged Logos. At this critical moment Saint-Just left for the army of the Rhine, and deprived Robespierre of his most devoted friend. Tallien, Fréron, and Barras, recalled from Bordeaux, Toulon, and Marseilles by Robespierre's urgency, burned to avenge themselves on the man who had curbed their tyranny; Fouché and Collot d'Herbois feared the keen tongue that had so bitterly reproached them for their cruelty. They circulated secretly lists of persons whom they pretended that Robespierre had doomed to death; they whispered that he desired to become a dictator, and to be the tyrant of the Republic. They plotted till in the Convention, which he had almost deserted, he was regarded with fear and with suspicion, and so July wears on till its end is nearly reached.

Ere we assist at the agony of the Republic, let us take one swift glance at the armies which we have seen rolling back on every side the torrents of invading foes. These spring and summer months of

'94, so dark and suffocating in Paris, are radiant on the frontiers with heroism, with daring, and with triumph. Here there is only one point of sadness. Young General Hoche, but six and twenty years of age, lets himself be carried away with the gladness of his success, and the ardour of his revolt against king and priest; for brief space he falls into the foul speech of Hébertisme and meets with grave rebuke: General Leveneur writes: "My general, you are going along a mistaken road . . . Read the discourses pronounced in the National Convention by the most respected citizens, and you will find nothing in them which recalls a journal which was doubtless thoroughly Republican, but to which none of these lent countenance nor encouragement. It was not in this strain that Miltiades, from the battlefield of Marathon, nor Scipio from the plain of Zama, announced the defeat of their enemies to their fellow-citizens of Athens or of Rome." As, in addition, young Hoche is somewhat restive under Carnot's hand, he is arrested and taken to Paris, so that he has no share in the spring and summer campaigns, though he is to do good service again by and by.

Pichegru commands the army of the Rhine through these months of 1794, and holds his own right gallantly, and thither rush Saint-Just and Lebas from time to time, to share every peril, to inspire the eager volunteers with their own passion, till they became apostles of Republicanism to

Europe rather than soldiers in a common war. On the 26th June at Fleurus, Jourdan, with Kleber and Moreau, leads seventy-six thousand men against eighty thousand of the allied troops under the Prince of Coburg. Fifteen thousand men fell in that terrible struggle, but at the end the Prince was in full retreat and the campaign of the north was decided.

Along the line of the Alps the Republican troops have carried all before them; they have seized the passes of St. Bernard, and in Savoy Dumabion, with Massena and Buonaparte—now general—nominally under him, has wrested the Col di Tende from the Sardinians (March 7th, 1794), and the French are masters of the maritime Alps.

In the Eastern Pyrenees Dugommier, set free by the fall of Toulon, chases the Spanish invaders from Boulogne (April 30th), and hurls them across the mountains into Spain itself, while in the Western, by the 3rd of June, the French are in the valley of Bastan, led by General Müller. For, as Carlyle tells us, Spain shall be invaded not invader. "*Shall*, that is the word; Committee of *Salut Public* has said it: Representative Cavaignac, on mission there, must see it done. Impossible! cries Müller. Infallible! answers Cavaignac. Difficulty, impossibility, is to no purpose. 'The Committee is deaf on that side of its head,' answers Cavaignac. 'How many wantest thou, of men, of horses, cannons? Thou shalt have them. Conquerors, conquered or hanged, forward

we must.' Which things also, even as the Representatives spake them, were *done*. The Spring of the New Year sees Spain invaded; and redoubts are carried, and passes and heights of the most scarp'd descriptions; Spanish Field-officerism struck mute at such cat-o'-mountain spirit, the cannon forgetting to fire. Swept are the Pyrenees; town after town flies open, burst by terror or the petard. In the course of another year Spain will crave peace; acknowledge its sin and the Republic; nay, in Madrid, there will be joy as for a victory, that even peace is got."

Nor is it on land only that the Republic fights for life, but also, though by no means maritime, on the sea itself, against its ocean-born English foes. At the end of May there is a convoy of grain from America expected, which France is looking for eagerly, and which England means to intercept. Admiral Howe leads the English fleet, Admiral Villaret-Joyeuse, with Commissioner Jean-Bon-Saint-André, is in command of the French. Twenty-six ships of the line has each admiral for his task. A few skirmishes take place, with no decisive result, and on June 1st the fleets engage all along the line. Howe's superior seamanship breaks the French line, but the French fight desperately one by one, until after two hours of ceaseless cannonading eleven English and twelve French ships are dismasted. All through the day the struggle rages, till six French ships, without masts, without sails, shot-riddled

and helpless, are in the hands of the English, and one more, "Le Vengeur," is still fighting desperately against three English ships, which pour in broadside after broadside on their foe: "Surrender" is the cry, but only shouts of *Vive la République! Vive la France!* ring from the shattered decks, the decimated crew. And see, the vessel begins to sink; pierced with shot, her hold is filling with water, and "Le Vengeur" is settling down! "Surrender! surrender!" comes from the English ships, but as answer the Republican tricolour floats from the broken stump which was once a mast, and a last broadside thunders out from the sinking ship. What remains of the crew is on the deck, ragged, blackened, doomed, but loyal to the end. The ship steadies, settles, plunges downwards, and the last *Vive la République* is stifled as the tricolour sinks beneath the waves. But the cry is answered with a shout of "Boats" from the besieging English ships: swift as the shot and shell had belched from their sides plunged into the water boats manned by the English tars; English hands grasped French ones, and dragged on board the sinking men who had chosen death rather than surrender; a moment ago they were frog-eating Frenchmen, to be murdered; now they are men, they are brothers to be saved.

We turn back to Paris. July is closing. The end may be counted by days.

During this month of July, the number of executions is terrible. They leap upwards in startling

fashion when Robespierre's hand is withdrawn. In the forty-five days before he quits the Committee, 577 were guillotined—a piteous list enough—but in the forty-five after his withdrawal (from June 11th to July 27th, or Prairial 23 to Thermidor 9) the number is no less than 1356.¹ The men whose names sign the lists of arrests are those who are plotting against Robespierre, the “Thermidoriens,” as they were afterwards called. It is those who made the Terror the bloodiest, who drag him down that they may save themselves, and who have left him in history crushed under the weight of the corpses they made headless. Robespierre perished for the same reason as that for which the Gironde perished and for which Danton perished—for trying to stem the Terror and to restore peace to France. They worked together to make the Republic; they fell, one after another, in the work; they died for the same cause. Death gave back to them the unity which the swift torrent of the Revolution had torn asunder. Give them thanks, O lovers of Liberty, for the good they wrought and for the goal they strove for, and sorrow, at once pitying and reverent, for their errors, for their failures, for their fall.

It is the 26th July, 1794 (Thermidor 8); a large number of the companies of artillery belonging to the sections have been sent out of Paris by order of the Committee of Public Safety. The plot is complete.

¹ *Histoire de la Révolution*, Louis Blanc, vol. xii, p. 36.

All is ready. Robespierre, weary, pale, resolute, mounts the tribune of the Convention to utter his last great speech ; the first words fall gravely, sadly, full of foreboding and of grief : " Let others trace for you flattering portraits ; I come to tell you useful truths. I am going to defend before you your authority outraged, your liberty violated. You will not be surprised that I also defend myself . . . The French Revolution is the first founded on the rights of man and on the principle of justice. Other revolutions demand but ambition ; ours imposes virtue. Ignorance and force have absorbed others into a new despotism ; ours, the offspring of justice, can rest nowhere save on her breast." After defending the Convention from the reproaches levelled at it, Robespierre turned to the accusation levelled against himself of aspiring to a dictatorship, and defended himself with all the passion of a loyal citizen branded as traitor to the Republic for which he had surrendered all. " By what fatality has this monstrous accusation of dictatorship been suddenly launched at the head of one of its members ? Strange project of one man, to persuade the National Convention to murder itself piecemeal with its own hands, in order that it may smooth for him the road to absolute authority ! Others may see the absurdity of such accusations ; I see but their atrocity. At least you shall answer to public opinion for your terrible perseverance in carrying out the design of murdering all the friends of the

fatherland, monsters who would rob me of the esteem of the National Convention, that most glorious prize of human effort, that I have neither surprised nor usurped, but that I have conquered ! To be an object of terror in the eyes of those one honours and loves ! For an upright and sensitive man there is no agony so frightful ; to inflict it on him is the worst of punishments . . . They call me tyrant ! If I were one they would grovel at my feet ; I would gorge them with gold ; I would give them permission to work every crime, and they would thank me . . . Cowards ! they would send me to the tomb with ignominy ; I should leave on earth but the memory of a tyrant . . . There is scarce an individual arrested, a citizen annoyed, to whom they do not say : ' There is the author of thy woes ; thou wouldst be free and happy if he did not exist.' How can I tell, or even guess, all the clandestine impostures, whether in the Convention or elsewhere, wrought to make me either odious or terrible ? I will content myself with saying that more than six weeks since I abandoned my functions as a member of the Committee of Public Safety, forced thereto by calumny and by my impotence to hinder evil and to do good, and I swear that in so doing I consulted only reason and the country's welfare. I prefer my position as a representative of the people to that of a member of the Committee of Public Safety, and before all I hold precious my position as man and as citizen of

France. Be things as they may, at least for six weeks I have not been dictator, I have had no influence in the Government. Is patriotism more secure? Is the spirit of faction more timid? Is the country more happy?" Then from this pathetic self-defence Robespierre passed to burning attack on the wrongs which were being committed; he painted in scathing language, though he left them nameless, those whose excesses were shaming the Republic, winding up with the proud declaration: "If it is impossible to appeal to principles without passing for a despot, I shall conclude that principles are proscribed and that tyranny is supreme, but not that it is my duty to be silent. What objection can be levelled against a man who speaks in reason, and who knows how to die for his country; I was made to combat crime, not to reign over it."¹

The gauntlet is thrown down; did Robespierre hope it would lie unlifted? Who can say? I am inclined to believe with Louis Blanc: "This discourse at once so proud and so sad, so touching and so terrible, was addressed less to the Convention than to posterity. Robespierre evidently felt that his hour was come. It was no longer his life, but his memory that he was seeking to defend."

For a few moments, as the echoes of his voice die away, there is hesitation among those who are pledged to destroy him. Barère, that some action may be taken which shall precipitate the conflict,

¹ *Histoire de la Révolution*, Louis Blanc, vol. xii, pp. 61-64.

suggests that the speech shall be printed, and Couthon, falling into the trap, adds that it ought to be sent to all the Communes of France. The Assembly votes the proposal, and then dispute arises.

Cambon challenges a reference made to himself ; Billaud-Varenne declares that the speech accuses the Committees, and ought not to be circulated without revision ; Charlier demands that it be submitted to the Committees ; a general cry arises : " Name those you accuse ! Names ! Names ! " Each man fears that he may be included in those Robespierre has denounced as dangerous ; a man of quick resolve would now dare all, and naming his foes would give confidence to all save these ; but quick resolve is not possible to Robespierre ; he hesitates ; Barère seizes the opportunity let slip, and on his urgency the Convention repeals the vote ; Robespierre is lost.

It is evening, and Robespierre is once more in the Jacobin Club. To his faithful friends there he reads the speech the Convention had rejected, and closes with the remarkable words : " You have heard my dying testament. I saw to-day that the league of the wicked is so strong that I may not escape it. I fall without regret. I leave to you my memory. You will defend it."

His memory ? Nay, they will defend his life. Payan, Coffinhal will raise the people, and will strike down those who threaten the man the people

love. But Robespierre hesitates. He will not act. Till Coffinhall, sharp and short, seizes Payan by the arm: "You see that his virtue shrinks from insurrection. Come! since he will not be saved, let us prepare for defence and avenge him." They pass the night in counsel, and gather swiftly together forces for the next day's strife.

Saint-Just has returned, too late alas! to save; only in time to die. It is the 27th July (Thermidor 9), and in the Convention Saint-Just is in the tribune, speaking for the last time. Calmly and keenly as ever he leads the attack, he denounces Collot d'Herbois and Billaud-Varenne as the would-be tyrants of the state—O Saint-Just, why not here yesterday?—but Tallien, Billaud-Varenne, Barère, are on their feet. Cries ring round the hall, and through the confusion Billaud is speaking: Robespierre had defended Danton, he had tried to save him; he was Hébertiste, Royalist, what not? "Down with the tyrant," yell those in the plot, and Robespierre's demand to be heard is lost in the shouts "Tyrant! tyrant! down with the tyrant"! Hour after hour passes in fierce, incoherent dispute. Barère has spoken, Vadier, Tallien, but Robespierre in vain strives for a hearing; his enemies fear the power of his tongue; from each side in turn he demands audience; from each he is repulsed by his ready foes; he appeals to the Montagne, but they cry: "The ghosts of Danton and of Camille drive you back!" Falling exhausted on a bench where

once the Gironde sat : " Wretch ! " they yell, " that was Vergniaud's seat ! " Starting up he makes a last appeal : " President of brigands ! will you hear me ? " and as his voice dies rattling in his parched lips and throat, a shriek is heard : " The blood of Danton chokes you ! " " Danton ! " he gasps, as he staggers backward, " is it Danton you avenge ? Cowards ! Why would you not defend him ? "

It is over. In a moment's silence Louchet is heard demanding that Robespierre be arrested. His brother starts forward to share his peril. Lebas claims to be included. Couthon, Saint-Just are added to the decree. But the very officers hesitate to take such prisoners into charge. But see the five go forward, for the time of struggle is over, and into the hands of the gens d'armes they surrender without further struggle all that might yet have saved France to the Republic and to Liberty.

And now strange difficulty. Robespierre is led to the Luxembourg, his brother to La Force, Saint-Just to the Ecossais, Couthon to the Bourbe, Lebas to the Maison de Justice du Département. But at each prison each is denied admittance, Why ? The reason is not far to seek. His foes must needs bring Robespierre arrested before the Revolutionary Tribunal for trial, for condemnation, they do not dare to challenge such a risk. He must be butchered, not tried ; he must be outlawed ere he can be murdered. But if the prison will not open to him, if he is found at liberty after arrest, he will be *hors*

la loi, and can be struck down wherever found. But Robespierre is resolute to submit to law, and checkmates their plan. Repulsed from the prison, he walks quietly to the prefecture of police and there surrenders himself.

Meanwhile his friends have not been idle. Henriot has been arrested, but the Jacobins have met and have sent Coffinhal to set him free; Henriot has gathered his men round him; Robespierre's friends are in the Commune and are assembled at the Hotel de Ville; they have sworn to guard him or to perish; but Robespierre will not come; Robespierre will obey law if he dies for it. "The death of one man," he says steadily, "is less hurtful to the Republic than the example of revolt against the National Convention"; had he not declared that he would not dispute his head with France? the time has now come and he will be loyal to his word; but Coffinhal will have none of this legality when life is at stake, and he carries Robespierre off by force and brings him to the Hotel de Ville. The Commune and the Convention are in conflict; but in the Commune is Robespierre with his scruples; in the Convention is Collot d'Herbois with his revenge. Couthon will have a proclamation issued to the armies. On the silence of the pause break in the fatal words: "Written in what name?" O Robespierre! there are crises in which the strong man is his own law, writes in his own name, and saves his country; but no; Robespierre could die

by the law; he could not break it for a moment even to save liberty. To him the Convention spoke in the name of France; he would not dispute his head.

While he hesitates, his foes hesitate not. In the Convention the decree has passed: "The Commune is *hors la loi*." It is duel for life or death. At the Commune all is ready but one thing; the sanction of Robespierre. He will not head the revolt, and without Robespierre's name the people will not follow. "Oh, if I were but Robespierre!" cries Coffinhal. Yet Robespierre will not rebel. "Nothing remains to us then but death," says Couthon, passionately. "You have said it," comes the answer, calm as death itself. One word of protest, half despair, half reproach, bursts from the loyal lips of resolute Saint-Just: "It is you who sacrifice us!" and then without further murmur he faces fate by the side of the leader he adores.

A sheet lies there, a proclamation to Robespierre's own section, calling on his friends to rise in his defence; it is signed by Legrand, Louvet, Payan, Lerebour; they push a pen into his fingers; his sad eyes glance round the faces of his friends; he may sacrifice his own life, may he sacrifice these? Is it at Saint-Just's cry that the pen touches the paper and traces Ro . . . it is thrown down, Robespierre is on his feet, he will not give the signal for rebellion against the law. Louis Blanc saw that paper: "Legrand, Louvet, Payan, Lerebour,

Ro . . ." Robespierre's blood, a few hours later, splashed over that incompleted signature.

For there are no scruples now in the Convention. The respect for law taught so long by Robespierre to his followers serves him but ill now. At the cry *Hors la loi!* one after another slowly falls away. It is two o'clock in the morning of the 28th of July, a rattle of arms is heard outside. Where is Henriot? He rushes in, his troops have deserted him, Bourdon is without, and is surrounding the Hotel de Ville with soldiers. Passionate Coffinhall seizes him in his mighty arms, and pitches him headlong from the window: "Coward! you are not worthy of a scaffold!"

Robespierre is sitting at the table, waiting. He has chosen to wed Death, and he fears not the touch of his bride. Lebas draws two pistols, and offers one to Robespierre. He puts it aside. He will die by the law, not by his own hand. The door is burst open, and Méda, an old soldier of Louis XVI, rushes in, pistol in hand, Bourdon behind him. Bourdon shrinking backwards, Judas-like, points at Robespierre, not daring himself to slay. There is a report; the ball has struck Robespierre on the face and shivered the lower jaw. Silent, he falls forward on the table, and his blood spurts over and blots the two letters of his name.

The report of Méda's pistol is answered by another; Lebas has shot himself through the heart and falls dead. Robespierre *jeune*, as his brother

falls, springs to his side ; he will not survive, but how die, since no weapon is there to hand ? But see, there are bayonets gleaming below ; there perchance may death be wooed. He springs from the window, and falls shattered, but alas ! breathing yet. Loyal friends pick up paralysed Couthon, who cannot escape unaided, but swift pistol shot follows them and Couthon is a prisoner. Saint-Just defenceless, but too proud to fly, is seized as he sits, gazing sadly at his leader, loyal in defeat as in success.

Bourdon's men pick up the wounded shattered bodies that were the leaders of a great party, and carry Robespierre to the National Convention. In the antechamber of the hall they fling him on a table, and leave him to listen to the tirades of his foes in the Convention, to face the gaze of his foes around. His mouth is full of clotted blood ; the torn muscles quiver ; but no word of complaint, no groan of anguish, escapes from Robespierre through his long agony. Now and then he raises one hand to his head ; now and then his forehead crumples into ridges of anguish well-nigh intolerable ; now and then his hand seeks a sponge of vinegar some merciful heart has placed near the cramped fingers, and he wipes with this his parched and bleeding lips. There he lies, hour after hour. Cowards who would not have dared to face him yesterday, spit in his face to-day. Only Saint-Just's loving, pitiful, reverent eyes now and then

reach his across the crowd. To all insults he opposes his tireless patience; to all taunts he answers, speechless, with the moveless serenity of his unflinching gaze; has he not chosen Death, and shall he quarrel with the fashion of the bridal robes? At length a surgeon comes to dress his wounds, lest the guillotine should be cheated of its prey; mocking faces jeer him as the blood-filled mouth is cleansed, the shattered jaw bandaged; listen, he speaks for the first time; he has leant forward to knot his garter, with trembling fingers, and a bystander reaches out a helping hand; all insults he has met in silence, but kindness demands a word: "Sir, I thank you."

He is carried to the Conciergerie, and is identified, he is *hors la loi*, no trial is needed; only the tumbrils to carry him and his to death. At five o'clock they come, most merciful of messengers, for Robespierre has been dying these seven-and-twenty hours, and his tired patient eyes crave the sleep of death. Robespierre with his mutilated face, his brother with his broken limbs, Henriot shattered with his fall, Couthon paralysed, Lebas dead, what procession of ghastly human agony have we here? Saint-Just alone, upright, calm, serene stands unwounded, iron to the end.

They are at the scaffold, and Robespierre *jeune*, Henriot, Couthon are carried up the ladder, helpless, and yield the remnants of their lives without a sigh. Robespierre gathers up his

strength, and mounts the ladder as steadily as he had mounted the tribune of the Convention. The executioner, without a word of warning, jerks the bandage from his head, and the broken jaw drops on his chest, startling one sharp cry of agony by the unexpected shock. But listen; the knife has crashed downwards, and the long anguish is over; Robespierre's head has fallen, and Saint-Just only remains, his feet "bathed in the blood of his master";¹ and now his head has rejoined the head he loved, and they lie together in the basket where have lain those of Vergniaud and of Brissot, those of Camille and of Danton.

The Republic is dead. And see! the sky that hangs over Italy is reddening with the dawn of the Empire.

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